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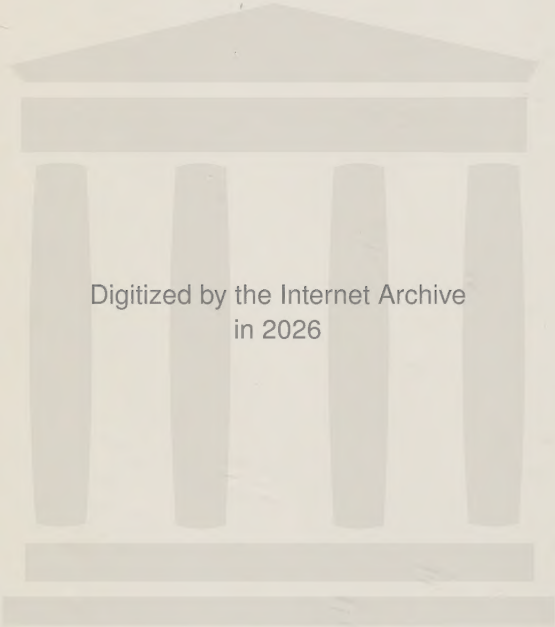

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DANTE AND HIS INFLUENCE

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University of Virginia
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DANTE AND HIS INFLUENCE

STUDIES

BY
THOMAS NELSON PAGE, D.Lit., LL.D.
AUTHOR OF "ITALY AND THE WORLD WAR," ETC.

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DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
THE FOUNDRESS OF
THE FLORENCE LATHROP PAGE-BARBOUR
LECTURE FOUNDATION
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
WHO WAS EVER MOVED BY
L'AMOR CHE MOVE IL SOLE E L'ALTRE STELLE

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE PAGE-BARBOUR LECTURE FOUNDATION

The University of Virginia is indebted for the establishment of the Page-Barbour Foundation to the wisdom and generosity of Mrs. Thomas Nelson Page, of Washington, D. C. In 1907, Mrs. Page donated to the University the sum of $22,000, the annual income of which is to be used in securing each session the delivery before the University of a series of not less than three lectures by some distinguished man of letters or of science. The conditions of the Foundation require that the Page-Barbour lectures for each session be not less than three in number; that they be delivered by a specialist in some branch of literature, science, or art; that the lecturer present

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The illustrations are reproduced from The Portraits of Dante through courtesy of the author, Frank Jewett Mather, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

In presenting this study of Dante Alighieri, Poet, Seer, Educator, I would not claim that I can add anything new to the vast volume of interpretation which devotion and scholarship have, at least in Italy, piled during these six hundred years—and more recently in other countries—about his revered name. All that is even pretended is to present in succinct form a brief sketch of the life of the Poet of Poets and of the conditions amid which that life was cast, together with certain considerations which a study of Dante and his Time, thrown on the screen of the recent past, has led me to believe should be of interest to those engaged in giving or receiving instruction.

In my humble judgment the educational work of this Country is the most important work going on in America to-day. On it depends the future of the Country whether for weal or woe. And in the education of this Country the work of Dante is a power, that if used must exert a vital influence upon its

future, and if neglected, must, whether recognized or not, be an immeasurable loss to us. It is, in fact, like the great water-power of the Italian mountains which, if understood and utilized, brings wealth and power alike to the State and to the citizen, and if not used is a loss which marks but the ignorance and the inefficiency of the people.

What is Education? It is not mere book-learning—that is only an instrument for use in Education. It is not even mere knowledge. It is the knowledge how to use Knowledge. It is understanding. "Get Knowledge," says the educator whom we call the wisest of men, "but withal get understanding."

Dante Alighieri is the expression of understanding. He has been the educator, the expression of understanding in Italy these six hundred years; his power and influence have extended among other nations even where they were not recognized as his. He is essentially the educator who is needed to-day; for he is the great Spiritual Educator.

In this brief study there is little space to enter upon the metaphysical discussion which has surrounded and at times befogged the work of the Poet since that autumn day when,

having returned to the Court of Guido da Polenta, worn down and ill from his unsuccessful mission of Peace to Venice and from his long journey beside the pestilential marshes of the low malarial region of the western shore of the Gulf of Venice, he gave to the Lord of Polenta the report of his last mission and, leaving to posterity, in imperishable form, the report of his Great Mission, ceased from his long exile and rejoined Beatrice in Paradise.

Not a metaphor, hardly a line of his that since that day has not been subjected to the closest scrutiny and the most minute analysis, in which he has suffered almost as much from the ill-conceived adulation of Panegyrists as from the hostility of enemies. But, although the whole body of his writings and especially the Divine Comedy are a great allegory of the soul's regeneration and although Dante ever painted throughout his work allegories and recondite symbols and packed trope and metaphor with mystical and hidden meaning; to carry the analysis of his noble poem so far as to destroy its incomparable poetry, seems like measuring with a foot-rule the lance of Don Quixote or surveying with a compass and chain the forest of Arden.

This study is addressed rather to discussion of the place that Dante occupies amid the constellations and of the light that has beamed from him upon mankind, and the writer will rest content to be in the position of a child who taken out in the night points to the Heavens and exclaims with awed wonder and delight: "Oh! see the stars!"

T. N. P.

DANTE AND HIS INFLUENCE

I

DANTE AND HIS TIME

Only by taking into consideration the conditions relative to which any great work has been produced can a just idea be had of the proportions of the accomplishment.

It will not be amiss then to advert briefly at the outset to the conditions which existed when a little more than six hundred years ago Dante Alighieri had the vision, which, deliberately discarding the language of scholarship, whose champion he had hitherto been, he now —with a loftier aim and a broader scope than the mere scholar's, gave to mankind in the common tongue of Italy, under the name of La Commedia (The Comedy), to which his admiring people some two centuries and a half later added the title: "Divine."

It is easy now to cross the sea; yet that voyage of Columbus still surpasses all others.

And when Dante Alighieri laid aside the language of scholarship, whose champion, earnest, haughty, and somewhat disdainful he had been, as was his wont, and took the dialects of Italy as the medium of his great message, he mounted to a higher level and with all his learning addressed a wider audience than the scholarship of Florence or Verona or Ravenna or even of Italy and Provence; for he addressed the heart of the World—the heart of Mankind in all succeeding ages and in all climes. From a grammarian he became a creator of a great language, from a provincial partisan he became a crusader in the mighty cause of the Kingdom of God; from a Prior of Florence he became the creator of the national consciousness of a people, and a Prior of mankind; from a charming singer he became a great poet and seer; from a mediæval scholar he became the herald of a new Dawn, hymning the Passion and Progress of the Human soul, the struggle of Mankind between Sin and Righteousness, and the Might, Majesty, and Dominion of God, whom to fear is the Beginning of Wisdom and whom reverently to adore is Salvation.

Should it be asked what has a poet to do with Education in this practical, modern world,

let the questioner remember that Aristotle's pupil, Alexander the Great, himself no mean judge of the military science, kept the poems of Homer in the jewel-casket of Darius and slept with them under his pillow, declaring them the best compendium of the art of war.

This, I assume to signify not that Homer was a trained Strategist or Tactician in the military science; but that Alexander, the pupil of Aristotle, held that to be a great Captain one must have the Imagination fully developed, and that the poems of Homer tended to expand the Imagination.

The Poet has everything to do with Education. In all ages the Poets have been the Educators of the world. And as Educators in their souls approach the Poet they become better educators. As their imaginations are elevated they approach the Ideal. And if we are going to accept Milton's definition of Education, of all Poets of modern times, Dante Alighieri was, perhaps, the greatest educator. He possibly had a greater influence on the course of Civilization than any other one man since his day. Dante's contribution to the world was one of ideas that advanced the cause of Righteousness.

James Russell Lowell, among our greatest students of Dante and best Dante-scholars, in his address on the occasion of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of Harvard, proclaims eloquently the superiority of intellectual to material wealth. "The real value of a country," he declared, "must be weighed in scales more delicate than the balance of trade. The garners of Sicily are empty now; but the bees of all climes still fetch honey from the tiny garden-plot of Theocritus. On a map of the world you may cover Judea with your thumb; Athens with a fingertip, and neither of them figures in the Prices-Current; but they still lord it in the thought and action of every civilized man. Did not Dante cover with his hood all that was Italy six hundred years ago? And if we go back a century where was Germany, outside of Weimar? Material success is good; but only as the necessary preliminary of better things. The measure of a nation's true success is the amount it has contributed to the thought, the moral energy, the intellectual happiness, the spiritual hope and consolation of mankind."

Many even of those who claim to love poetry and to find refreshment in the crystal

founts declare themselves unable to find the poetry in Dante, or to comprehend his long, intricate, and labored astronomical plan through which, as through a maze, Virgil guides his patient follower. We may leave all this to those interested, like Dante, in the Ptolemaic System. Yet, when the key is held it is all simple. It needs not that we enter into it further than to say, that Lucifer thrown down from Heaven fell to Earth and sank down into Hell, into the bottomless pit at the centre of the Earth, whose waters shrank from the foul contact to the Southern hemisphere. On the opposite side from an island in the Southern Seas rises the mountain of Purgatory, its base encircled by the atmosphere, its terraces crowned by the earthly paradise, steeped in eternal light, about which revolve the heavens of the planets and fixed stars, and high above all is Heaven, the seat of God, where he abides in ineffable light eternal.

If they shrink from his comprehensive and apparently intricate symbolism, let them but get hold of the thread at the start and the clew will unwind itself as easily as that by following which, Theseus escaped from the Cretan Labyrinth.

His system is less complicated than appears at first view. He divides Hell into seven circles (some find three great divisions), for the punishment of the seven deadly sins, non-knowledge of Christ, Lust; Gluttony; Avarice and Prodigality, Anger and Sullenness, Heresy; Violence and Fraud. The Seventh deep is itself divided into two parts, the first of them assigned to those who committed violence against their neighbor, themselves and God. The lowest hell of all is for those guilty of Fraud—the Betrayal of Women, Flattery; Simony; False Prophecy; Peculation; Hypocrisy; Thefts; False Counsel; Schism and Imposture; Treachery to those who trusted. To each class of sinners is assigned the terrible punishment adjudged suited to the sin. Through these several circles—"deep within deep"—led by Virgil typifying Learning, Poetry and worldly wisdom who has been sent to him by Beatrice, who typifies Divine Wisdom and Grace, the Poet passes to Purgatory, where likewise there are seven circles or cornices wherein Souls are purified from Pride, Envy; Wrath, Indifference, Avarice; Gluttony and Lust, to which are opposed the seven Virtues: Humanity; Kindness or Charity; Patience; Zeal;

Poverty; Abstinence and Chastity. And above Purgatory is the Earthly Paradise from which the purified soul enters into the ineffable Light of the presence of God.

What do we know of Dante—we Americans? We think of him mainly as an Italian Poet of the Middle Ages—much talked of, especially just now, by those who like or pretend to like foreign writers—who wrote, in incomprehensible verse, an imaginative and lurid account of a dismal journey through a lurid Hell—a long poem containing certain phrases which have caught the attention of the world, such as, "All hope abandon, Ye, who enter here," and relieved by a few touches of poetry, such as that relating to Francesca da Rimini. And we know that this was followed by two other poems called Purgatory and Paradise; but of no special merit or interest. We know that he is said by the Brahmin-class of Intellectuals or would-be Intellectuals, to be a great poet and we accept their verdict as we accept their theory of the Law of Gravitation and would equally accept that of Relativity if generally held, without knowing or caring much about it. Or, at most, do we not think of him as a poet, great enough, indeed, to have secured

the admiration of the reading world because of his vivid description of a journey through Hell?

And then our thoughts revert to Milton, the great English Poet whom we claim as our own, with a certain smug satisfaction, as who should say: "Can anything equal to this come out of Italy?"

It is discreditable to us that we should be so ignorant of and so indifferent to a work which did much to call Italy to a new birth; and which opened the imposing procession of Italian poetry and afterward of English poetry —a work which was the first budding of the spring which produced so rich a harvest in the summer and autumn that have followed; which broke down the doors and brought Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton into the light and showed them the way to spread their pinions and rise into the high regions of a more spiritual art; which cracked the shackles of Mediævalism, and led the way to the emancipation of man's thought; which taught Luther to nail his theses on the doors of the Schlosskirche at Wittenberg and to burn the Bull of excommunication and consign Leo to the Inferno as Dante had

consigned his predecessor, Boniface; which gave John Calvin his heaviest ammunition to wage the warfare of his grim theology. No book in all the world, save the Bible, and perhaps the works of Homer, have had such an influence on the progress of Civilization as we understand it in Christendom, as that which we inconsiderately consign to the dusty shelves of some public Institutional Library.

It is a discredit to us that we should be so ignorant of the greatest contribution to the thought of the world that was made in the Middle Ages. It is a discredit to us that in our application to the practical we so tend to exalt the commercial and forget the ideal, that we have become known to some of the other Peoples as a commercial People and not an idealistic People. Ideas, at last, control the world and promote the progress of mankind with a power far beyond any power of the material.

Moses led the Children of Israel to freedom and power, though he never trod the promised land. Columbus opened the way to the New World, though he touched only its island fringe and Amerigo Vespucci gave it his name; Langley discovered the principle of the air-

plane, though the Wrights invented the practical machine.

In presenting Dante, as I, a humble student of his great work, would like to do, I find that my pleasant task divides itself naturally into three parts.

First: The situation of the world when Dante came, and the conditions among which he sprang to his stature together with some description of what he appeared to his contemporaries.

Secondly: His earlier work and progress toward his later complete accomplishment.

And *thirdly:* His great work and its influence on the course of Civilization.

We all know the great contribution made to the world by the Genoese, Christopher Columbus, but how few know of the contribution made by the Florentine, Dante Alighieri. Yet, as Columbus, two hundred years later, with his Italian imagination discovered and opened up a new world for Nations of which he had never heard or dreamed, no less than for Spain under whose flag he sailed; so Dante, sailing on a vaster Ocean, discovered a vaster world and opened up wider regions for the inspiration of mankind.

It can hardly be doubted that Dante came to America with Christopher Columbus, if not in the locker of the Santa Maria, the Niña, or the Pinta, at least in his memory; for every Italian knew Dante as the Greek of old knew Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides so as to correct a false quantity by a recitationist. Certainly Dante came over with his fellow Florentine, Amerigo Vespucci.

Amerigo Vespucci held that Dante's reference in the first Canto of Purgatory to the

> "Four stars ne'er seen before save by the ken
> Of our first parents,"

was a prophecy of the Discovery of America.

Who shall say what part Dante performed in firing the imagination of Christopher Columbus? What effect on his conclusion touching the sphericity of the Earth—Dante's conception of the concentric circles of depth and height and Dante's idea of the globe may have had on Columbus's thoughtful mind?

To obtain a proper idea of Dante and his work requires a knowledge of his time and surroundings as a sort of screen on which to project the poet. Thus only can a just con-

ception be had of his majestic proportions. And when we shall have got the true measure be very sure that his statue will stand as the symbol of Italian genius to which America owes so vast a debt.

Poetry is the spiritual expression of its age and environment. Of no Poet is this truer than of Dante. His work contains a reflection of the whole life about him, and stands after six hundred years as the universal revealer of the thought and temper of the Middle Age at its close, with which close, indeed, he had no little to do. For as Wycliffe later, following his example, headed the New Learning in England and with his translation of the Bible into the Vulgar tongue, brought up the English language and, so to speak, crystallized it into an imperishable medium for the thought and aspiration of the Saxon World, so Dante, the leader of them all, had already placed on the walls of his Age the imperishable picture of his time and opening wide the door pointed the Italian people to the immortal principles of Justice and Truth and with the enchantment of his genius turned, however slowly, their faces to a new dawn and a brighter day.

Dante places himself sixth in order of great poets. You will recall the fine scene in the IVth Canto of the Inferno, where he discovers "a flame, that on the darkened hemisphere prevailing, shined"—and how he asked his guide:

"Questi chi son che hanno cotanta orranza
Che dal modo degli altri li diparte?"

"Who are these that boast
Such honor, separate from the rest?"

Virgil replies that their honored name gained them favor even in Heaven. Meantime, he hears a voice:

"Onorate l'altissimo poeta."

And as the voice passes, he sees four mighty shades advance and his master says:

"Mira colui con quella spada in mano
Che vien dinanzi a tre sì come sire,
Quegli è Omero, poeta sovrano,
L'altro è Orazio, satiro, che viene,
Ovidio è il terzo e l'ultimo è Lucano."

"Mark that one with the sword who doth precede
The three, as though he were their Lord.
The next who comes is Horace, the satirist,
Ovid is third and last comes Lucan."

And the poet says:

"Cosi vidi adunar la bella scuola
Di quei signor dell' altissimo canto,
Che sopra gli altri com'aquila vola."

"Thus saw I assemble the fine school
Of those Lords of loftiest song
Who like the eagle soar o'er the rest."

But the Eagle knows its own kind and after grave conference they turn to Dante and salute him, whereat his Master smiles. They did him yet more honor; for they admitted him sixth of that high company—of those "who know."

I think though, that Posterity, however Dante may have been content with his place, will recast the order and place him higher in the shining rank. Not Horace, for all his wit and grace, nor Lucan, with his gifts and power, appears to us of quite the school of loftiest song, and there are at least one or two more to join in the Eagle Flight and soar over others.

Not many even of the great poets have had the fortune of international fame or have survived to posterity, at least in name. Some have come down to us; but their names have been lost. When they have survived, be very

sure that they have struck the deep fountains of human nature.

You can count them on the fingers—David —or those whose immortal strains bear the name of "the Sweet Psalmist of Israel;" Homer; Virgil; Dante; Shakespeare. There may be others—a few—Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, English, as to whom there is diversity of views. But as to these there is no question. All admit their work—their universality—even those who have never read them, but only read of them, bow to the universal verdict and accord them the palm of Immortality. Each of them has his place fixed in the firmament. It would be, perhaps, a futile labor to compare them one with another. In the shining galaxy the Shepherd King and Psalmist and the Blind Harper of Greece, the Monarch of sublimest song who like an eagle soars over the rest, stand possibly pre-eminent in the estimation of the Ages. But certainly for the modern scholar of every race and tongue, Dante stands nearest to Homer in the loftiness of his flight and the immeasurable sweep of his pinions. Next to Homer he gave forth a more echoing song and inspired a more numerous and tuneful progeny. Like Homer, under guise of earthly strife, he

sang of the conflict of Human Passions and the immortal struggle of the Human Soul.

Should a question arise as to Virgil's rank, let it be sufficient answer that Dante chose him among all the great to be his "Master and Guide," through the vast rounds of that untrodden world whose wondrous griefs he has unveiled to all the ages.

He addresses him in words which we now may well address to Dante himself:

"Or se' tu quel Virgilio, e quella fonte
Che spande di parlar sì largo fiume?
Risposi lui con vergognosa fronte;

O degli altri poeti onore e lume,
Vagliami il lungo studio e il grande amore,
Che m'han fatto cercar lo tuo volume.

Tu se'lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore,
Tu se' solo colui, da chi io tolsi
Lo bello stile che m'ha fatto onore."

"Art thou that Virgil, thou that mighty fount
That spreads abroad so vast a stream of song?
O honor thou and light of other poets!
May it avail that I have studied long
And greatly loved thy work and conned it well.
Thou art my Master and my very source,
From whom alone I took the noble style
Which since hath brought me honor."

It must, indeed, be a cause of great pride to all Italians that of the world's greatest poets who have enlightened Mankind, two sprang from Italian soil, and of the others one owes his regeneration for the Modern World to Italian scholarship and the other owes Italy the inspiration for some of his greatest work.

The oldest civilized people of Christendom and, indeed, of the World, as we reckon civilization, are the Italians. Greece had her civilization before Italy and, in certain respects, as of Art and Philosophy, had a higher Civilization, as Egypt and Mesopotamia and the Orient had their civilization before that of Greece, but these were all civilizations of a different kind, and when we speak of civilization, it imports in the term not only the idea of a general civic order; but such order plus the inner spirit of Christianity. And of this Western Civilization the Italian People are the oldest exponent. It is the direct successor of the Roman People who gave the Civil law; Civic Order and Christianity to the people of Western and Northwestern Europe. It is not uncommon for us to draw a great distinction between the Romans of old and the Italians. Yet the Italian is among the least changeable of

Races. Of all the occidental races the Italian changes least. That some change occurred under the Barbarian invasion appears certain, and traces of the Lombards—the Longbeards of the North—still continue, as still continue traces of Greek and Norman in the South. But the Italian race of to-day differs scarcely more from the old race than the American of to-day on the Atlantic slope differs from the English Churchmen who settled Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas, or than the New Englanders differ from the Puritans who settled New England from whom they trace descent. In manners and customs the Italian differs from his remote predecessors hardly at all. Many a little *paese* in Italy has distinctive customs and costumes which have come down through the centuries unchanged, jealously guarded and resisting all the assaults of surrounding innovations; and as they have preserved the outward costumes of their fathers, so they have preserved their mental traits. Italy is the land of conservatism. The songs of Italy have sounded through her fields and vineyards with plaintive melody through long centuries; her religious chants—many of them at least—for all their Christian words, were in

their structure originally taken from hymns to the Bona Dea or some other pagan goddess. The Gregorian chants were intended to supplant them, as Pius the Tenth in his revival of Gregorian Music desired to banish the profane music of the modern opera. Italy is the land of permanence, as America is the land of change.[1]

With something of the Oriental and much of the Greek Civilization, which it had taken over, the Roman Civilization had imposed itself on the Countries about it. The Roman Eagles bore to and protected in other lands the elements of what we to-day know as Civilization. And although in many instances they were later expelled, they left behind them seed enough to keep alive a spirit which should under refreshment eventually produce the fruit known as Modern Civilization, and in time nations which they had thus brought forward were able to impose something of the form which they had brought forth on Rome itself.

But even so, and even although the seat of the Roman Empire was moved to Byzantium,

[1] There is nothing in Italy, native to it, so diverse from the ancient dance as the Tango or the Turkey-Trot is from the Minuet and the Sir Roger de Coverley.

as nearer the centre of the Empire and safer from Barbarian attack, the former capital, Rome, still retained sufficient prestige and sufficient vigor to become the centre of Christendom and, supported by Italian intelligence, was to give to Christendom modern Civilization.

Mediæval European history is divided into three periods: the Dark Ages as the first period after the fall of Rome extending to the time of Charlemagne; next, the Middle Ages covering the period from the time of Charlemagne to about the year 1300; and lastly, the Renaissance, or rebirth of Civilization in Europe.

And as in the Roman Days from Rome flowed in the train of the Eagles the Education and Order that trained Teuton and Frank; Briton and Celt; so in later time flowed from Italy the Light that was to lighten the Gentiles. Roman missionaries christianized Saxon and Frank Kings and later carried classical learning into the wilds of France and England. But during the Dark Ages this learning was well-nigh lost and during the Middle Ages, though it was revived, it was almost confined to the Church which, largely by virtue of the monopoly of its possession and of the ignorance of the lay world, was enabled to assert a power which per-

vaded Christendom; rivalled and at times dominated the power of the successors of Augustus, Constantine and Charlemagne. It was its possession of not only the keys of St. Peter, but of the Keys of Knowledge that enabled the Church to dominate so the minds of men that even monarchs trembled before the terrors of its excommunication and barefoot and humble besought with open shame pardon of the head of this mighty power. So long as it was based on a truly moral foundation it was supreme and the Temporal Powers could be counted on to support and advance it, using its spiritual authority over men's minds to support its own temporal authority. It was only when, swollen with worldly pride, it asserted its claim to Temporal Power that men, discovering that such an assertion was merely political and that Ecclesiastical rule in political affairs was worse than Lay rule, revolted against it as an usurpation, and finding the need of education in temporal knowledge to meet the evils to which the Ecclesiastical Monopoly was leading, began to pry open the doors which closed in the precious treasure and, gaining access thereto, began with it to enrich the world.

The wreck of the Roman Empire at the

hands of the Barbarians—the Bearded folk, whom it had brought forward through its training, especially in the art of war, left the great dominions which the Roman power had controlled a prey largely to Anarchy, in which the only power recognized was force and the only amelioration was the spirit of the doctrine which the single organization that remained cohesive: the great Church, taught, even if it did not always practise.

Gradually this condition of Anarchy took to itself some form of ordered force and as the fragments took shape, under the genius of Charlemagne a new Empire containing the semblance of the old Empire came into being in the West and its able head, allying himself with the head of the Spiritual Power, was crowned Emperor at Rome at Christmas of the year 800. Then began a new régime, which like its predecessors, passed through one phase after another following natural laws and affected by natural conditions until Nations and States began to take form, based upon or growing out of what came to be known as the Feudal system because its foundation was a title or fee held from some overlord who in consideration of service rendered by the vassal,

should give him protection; and therefore, a mutual duty was owed by the one to the other. And still, the one power which extended across boundaries was the power of the Church with its centre at Rome and its ever-increasing claims generally recognized even by the heads of States.

This Feudal system, however, fortified in walled towns and stone castles, supported by the sword, the torture and the dungeon, became in great regions a new form of tyranny and, indeed, of anarchy, wide-spread and so destructive that eventually it defied alike both the supreme temporal and spiritual power—alike Emperor and Pope. The system resulted in a state of well-nigh universal war, and even of private warfare which the Church itself was compelled to recognize and which it was fain to ameliorate by securing what came to be known as "the truce of God"; that is, a common agreement to abstain from warfare from Wednesday night to Monday morning, and not to make war on days consecrated to high Church festivals.

And now a brief glance at the conditions existing in the world in the latter part of the thirteenth century when in the month of May,

1265, in the small, but wealthy city and Republic of Florence, Dante Alighieri, son of Alighieri and Bella dei Donati came into the world.

To begin with England as that with whose conditions and Literature we are generally most familiar: England, red with her romantically named, but bloody wars of the Roses following the hundred years' war with France, lay even two hundred years later in a welter of brutality and ignorance; in which rival claimants of the crown slew each other remorselessly and waded through slaughter to a throne. Knowledge of Letters was confined almost exclusively to the Priesthood, who gave allegiance to a foreign sovereign and a foreign tongue. The English language, in fact, was not used in Courts of Justice prior to Dante's Time.

Of Literature there was none. Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote (1140) in Latin his history of the Kings of Britain, composed largely of Celtic legends, including those of King Arthur's Court; and a metrical version, which was termed Layamon's Brut, had been written by a French Priest. There were certain Religious Poems, composed of metrical stories from the Bible, and a few others. And later on from

Italy and Provence the Trouvères brought the tales of the Paladins of Romance. But England was steeped in a feudal rudeness, little less than Semi-Barbarism.

Next, as to France: France was more advanced, especially in the South which had been in more immediate and closer contact with Roman Rule and Civilization. Her native Literature was, however, for the most part composed of Monkish Legends, or Legends of the deeds or loves of the Paladins ancient or modern, that is, mediæval, as we should now call them. Among her literary products of about this time—the last half of the thirteenth century—the Romaunt of the Rose was possibly the most notable. But as Literature in France was like that in England, almost wholly in the hands of the Church, the learning was largely classical, and the literature Religious. The main exceptions were the Poems of the Provençaux who sang of Love and Gallantry—and Love needs no Learning to sing her power. These songs the Troubadours carried from Court to Court and Castle to Castle.

Germany was, after the time of the Emperor, Otto First, nearer to Italy and to Rome

than any other Power; but the relation was never settled definitely, and was dependent on the personality of Emperor and Pope. A German Emperor had two hundred years before Dante's time stood at Canossa in the snow awaiting a Pope's pleasure to be admitted to kneel and do penance before the Pontiff who had excommunicated him, and although able Emperors had since readjusted the balance and could command where they had once obeyed, no Emperor came to Italy without an Army at his back, and Italy was now amid lesser divisions, too manifold to discuss, divided into two great camps, the Guelfs and Ghibellines, the former, who represented generally speaking the more liberal party, the more aggressive and Democratic party of the people, which took the side of the Pope, and the Ghibellines the more conservative and reactionary party—the party of the Nobles which stood for the Emperor. Not that the line of cleavage was always stable—far from it. But these were the general lines of division in a Society in which the whole world was at war with some one and often with many.

Germany like France was the field for the exercise of the Feudal system; but its expres-

sion growing out of the necessity to have some one central figurehead if not authority had brought to the German states some form and even some substance of ordered self-government. The Emperor was elected by the princes and was in theory supposed to represent his electors as well as his other vassals impartially, though in practice it was often otherwise.

The Feudal system, however, was never so completely established in Italy as in Northern and Northwestern Europe. In Italy, owing in part to natural economic conditions and, in part, to the character of the people, these, having both a greater imagination and a greater turn for artistic work than in other lands, banded together to resist the tyranny of Feudal lords and gathered in cities and a change took the form of communal government, the members of the several trades forming themselves into guilds which exercised political functions and which, being jealous of their privileges, became in time political bodies which contributed powerfully to the self-Government of the cities, the more important of which became republics, independent of and hostile to all others and owing only a fealty now to the head of the Empire, now to the

head of the Church. Thus, grew up a certain national consciousness not readily reconcilable with their attitude toward each other and yet unmistakable even throughout the long and bloody factionalism of the Ghibelline and Guelf warfare. What were wanting were a common head and a common tongue. Dante strove to bring the first and gave the last.

Yet, as in all times men and women love, marry, and are given in marriage, and as high courage is ever mated with the nobler instinct of the heart, Love made its appeal to the heart of the Feudal Knight and warrior and the soft blandishments of Woman relieved the stern savagery of the age of strife. Thus, the Age of Chivalry came into being and presently the Loves and Deeds of the Paladins were the themes of the Minstrel of the North and were being sung in castle and bower by the Troubadours of the Sunnier South. Nowhere in the world was this more general or its effect greater than among the Italian race of Italy and Provence. The emotion of Religion in which the beatitudes of Heavenly bliss and the terrors of Infernal perdition were preached with fervor, sent men on crusades to recover the tomb of Him who had made the Cross the symbol of

Divine Love, or into monasteries to practise penance for sins which had crucified the Lord of Love: the Son of God. In Italy was the fountain source of Religious Power; and Religious training—in fact, of all intellectual training. In Italy, the artisan as he hammered his iron sang of Tristan and Lancelot and their immortal loves.

In this strange time which presents a medley of diverse and changing forces came in the year 1265 into the world, Dante Alighieri, destined to be the greatest poet and painter and teacher, not only of his time and country, but among the greatest of all time; the chief prophet and seer and spiritual leader of Italy; the trumpet of Liberty of the Italian people; the proclaimer of a moral principle in Government; the protagonist of the idea of complete division between the Temporal and Spiritual Power.

But no attempt at reform, not backed by sufficient force availed to ameliorate greatly conditions which were founded on force and which required force and violence to maintain them. As population increased, they could only be supplied by better and increased production and distribution of the necessaries of life. But this is precisely what the existing

conditions prevented and when every field and vineyard was subject to foray and every highway was a mark for plunder, there was little incentive to industry or traffic. Neither could be maintained save by force and except under sufficient guard they were not maintained. Thus, the population became divided into two classes, the workers and the fighters; and the system was based on an organization which required a headship with sufficient strength and boldness to conduct it. The population could find only the meagrest security by submission to such leaders and they lived within call of his trumpet or bell while he in turn lived strongly guarded within his castle surrounded by his guards or bravos, his power limited only by the measure of violence which would accomplish his will without exciting a revolt strong enough to overthrow him.

The only apparent exception was the Priesthood, but often this was apparent rather than real and priests and prelates who had begun as investigators with promises of amending the intolerable violence and injustice that outraged the elementary public opinion of the time, ended by out-Heroding Herod and eclipsing in injustice and oppression and sometimes in

vice those they had supplanted. Thus, society moved in a vicious circle. The picturesque castles—"the cloud-capped towers; the gorgeous palaces" about which poets sang were prisons reeking with vice and vermin and foul with every conceivable disease and horror. The castles and terraced-hills which in the sunshine alike excite the traveller's wonder and admiration were made by the corvée or forced-labor under the lash and the gallows. The gallows-tree and the dungeon were as conventional parts of the Lord's or Seigneur's castle as the chapel-cross and the hall, and were as much used, and the guest of to-day might readily enough occupy the dungeon to-morrow. Life was set in the key of violence and its fit expression was the invention of gunpowder—a new and more effective means of destruction. Science later turned to the finer art of poison; but for the time being men preferred to glut their appetites with blood and ocular horror. Betrayal was met with a dagger-thrust or mutilation, as in Paolo Verruchio's case, and enmity found its gratification in the starvation of its objects, as in the case of Ugolino and his children. Before leaving his mansion every gentleman practised of a morning his sword-

exercise to test his agility and keep him in readiness to defend himself and no man of importance stirred outside his courtyard without his bodyguard of bravos. It required but the biting of the thumb to bring about a feud in which both houses might be completely destroyed with consequences direful to the entire community, which wished a plague on them both.

It was presently found that courage and skill in arms were means to distinguish men even though they were without estates, provided they could establish their position among the Chivalrous class; and those who possessed exceptional qualities, though having no titles to castles or lands, might secure titles of honor such as Knighthood. And these became a privileged class, generally retainers of the great feudatories, sometimes becoming feudatories themselves. From this evolved a sort of system of rules which demanded more courtesy, a sense of personal obligation—and before long an order of Knighthood which has been likened to the order of the Priesthood in the Church. In fact, later on, certain special associations or orders of Knighthood grew up which were vowed to special aims and claimed special

privileges—such as the Knights of Malta, who maintain their organization down to the present day. These mainly obtained their promotion from the representatives of militant power, and they naturally were for the most part aligned on the side of the Temporal rather than the Spiritual Powers. And in the great contest which divided and racked Italy from one end to the other, between the heads of the Temporal and Spiritual Powers of Christendom, the militant lay-orders generally espoused the side of the Emperor to which was given the name Ghibelline and those in opposition to them espoused the side, rather the cause, of the Pope. And as the chief weapon of the latter was, in certain phases of the struggle, the power to strike men through their ignorance and superstition and to terrify the superstitious with the threat of Damnation those who were less ignorant and less bound by superstition naturally found themselves aligned against the great Organization which claimed the Comminate Power. Thus, the intellectual class outside of the ecclesiastical orders fell largely into the ranks of the Ghibellines.

And now having taken a glance at the general conditions prevailing in and about Italy

when the intellectual and spiritual force that was compacted in Dante Alighieri came into the world, let us see what existed in Florence at the time of his coming.

There is little or no mention of Florence on the Arno in the early records. The mention of that region is of Fiesole on the mountain above the flowery valley through which the Arno courses: Fiesole with its Roman remains: Castle and Amphitheatre and baths, which Dante couples in the speech of the older dames of Florence with their tales of Troy and Rome.

But Fiesole had been overthrown and destroyed in the war which the rising young Florentine Republic had waged against it and its feudal Tyrants one hundred and thirty-five years before Dante's birth and we have a picture of Florence's golden age of simplicity and antique virtue drawn by the shade of Dante's crusading ancestor, Cacciaguida, as a screen on which to project Florence's decadence in virtue as she revelled in opulence, luxury, and splendor.

Fiesole had been an important link in the chain of Feudal strongholds, largely held by *stranieri;* successors of foreign invaders who, scattered throughout the country, harried and

oppressed the industrious and thrifty Tuscans as they did in other parts of the Peninsula. But the people of Tuscany had other qualities than industry and thrift; they possessed imagination and artistic gifts and courage and pride like the Venetian and Genoese and the inhabitants of sundry other provinces of Italy who had resisted tyrants and assumed the powers of self-government. They banded together and formed guilds which however jealous of each other united in the common cause and either overthrew or made terms with the Feudal Signori; destroyed their castles and brought them to recognize their rights, as in the case of the great Countess Matilda, whom Dante has signalized.

Certain of these nobles, their country castles destroyed, had come to Florence with what was left of their estates where, being trained to arms and to command, they contributed to her expansion and power, if not to her wealth. But besides those endowments they brought with them their pride and their enmities and here they found a fruitful field for the exercise of both.

As for a time after her victorious war with Fiesole, Florence had peace, at least, with out-

side rivals until near the time of Dante's birth; her thrifty citizens applied themselves to their arts with such good results that they rapidly began to amass wealth and the city extended so that the walls were enlarged three times. And as her merchants extended their trade, a wealthy class of Grandi sprang up which insensibly grew into power and either rivalled or allied themselves with the poorer nobles. And thus, not only the old contest between Guelf and Ghibelline continued with unabated fervor; but new factions came into being; the rivalries and enmities were multiplied and subdivided and Florence became one of the most active storm-centres of Italy.

The beginning of the new strife was when a young del Monte noble broke his engagement with a damsel of the Amidei family and espoused, instead, a daughter of Qualdrada dei Donati and on Easter Sunday, 1215, the outraged Amidei connection, after a family conference, avenged the insult by murdering the faithless bridegroom on the bank of the Arno. Thenceforth all Florence took sides and added to all other causes an implacable feud which raged for a hundred years.

So much of the political condition. And now what of the Religious? The corruption of the

Church had assumed a form and proportions that shocked the conscience of earnest churchmen, and a reform was started of which the Monastery of Cluny became the centre. St. Dominic and St. Francis had taken up the matter of Religion and Morality at a time when the connection had been severed and appeared in danger of being completely lost. They had a marked effect on the people at large. The mendicant orders spread rapidly and their devotion constituted a great reform movement which affected the Priesthood.

Great scholars like St. Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus joined the former order and added to its lustre, and devout disciples preached and bore the gospel of piety and self-abnegation to remote quarters. But vows of poverty and chastity were not likely to affect the Hierarchy engaged in practices quite the opposite and enlisted in a desperate struggle to maintain and extend the power which their organization had been able to secure during the preceding age under able and ambitious Supreme Pontiffs. They were now endeavoring to withstand Frederic II, the Emperor, and among the stakes was Florence now grown opulent and powerful.

In this long strife which kept Florence in

turmoil, however the different currents ran there were always the two main currents of conflict: the Imperial Party of the Ghibellines, and the Papal Party of the Guelfs. For a time the former appeared to have the ascendancy. Frederic II, Dante's "good Frederic," rose to power in Italy with the apparent goodwill even of the Church; then Ghibellines participated in his triumph and the Guelfs were driven forth. Laws were passed creating the office of Podestà who would govern in a manner to please the Ghibelline nobles. But the people finally interposed and a new office was created to overrule the Podestà and he was backed by a militia created to sustain his power. But the wind of popular approval changed; Fortune and friends abandoned him and Frederic died in 1250, reviled and excommunicated. The Ghibellines in turn were chased into exile and the Guelfs returned to power to glut their revenge.

Then came Manfred (1258) from Sicily, Frederic's natural son and, in the battle fought on the plain of Montaperti, September 4, 1260, defeated, with the aid of the Ghibelline exiles under leadership of Farinata degli Uberti and of some treachery on the part of certain Floren-

tines, the Guelfs of Florence and having destroyed their army took possession of their city, whose destruction likewise was proposed, and probably would have been carried out had not the Ghibelline leader, Farinata degli Uberti interposed and brought himself immortality in a verse of Dante's:

"Colui che la defesa col viso aperto."

Manfred might have brought peace to Italy if not to Florence as he desired to reconcile the warring sections; but Pope Urban IV was French, a cobbler's son, and he stood for the French King's pretensions and on his death in 1264 he was succeeded by Clement IV, a Provence lawyer, who also opposed Manfred, whom he excommunicated, and Charles of Anjou, having come with an army composed of all the elements opposed to Manfred, the latter was defeated and slain in the battle of Benevento, February 26, 1266, where "*fu bugiardo ciascun pugliese,*" and later his body was torn from the sepulchre and thrown into the river, and Conrad, his boyish heir was taken, and executed.

Thus closed on the scaffold in that Piazza of Naples the Swabian line that Dante so signalized as "the three Swabian blasts," that

had begun with its interest in the new life and its taste for Literature to lead Italy toward a new Intellectual dawn. Loose claimants to Imperial thrones were as inconvenient and as dangerous then as now.

Of Poets before Dante Italy had according to catalogue fewer than France where chiefly in sunny Provence they were singing in measures that were extending both North and South, and were awakening an emulation which in time was to bring forth beyond the Alps a choir whose melodious song should draw the attention of the world.

Yet Italy had her Poets especially to the Southward where in Frederic's Court had begun to sound strains that recalled how once Sicily had resounded with song. The Provençal singers had come down and were awakening those of Italy.[1]

Italy, like France (to follow the thoughtful study referred to), went through the cycle: Latin chronicles, monastic in form; then the sweep of monastic legend in the old tongue, the Latin; then those of a more secular form;

[1] I cannot do better than point the reader to the work of the latest of the Dante students, Professor Vittorio Turri, to whose thoughtful study of Dante I am indebted for much in the following résumé.

then later on, "Histories versified in the classical metre of the epic poem"; then historical songs popularized in briefer and lighter form; legends, religious and heroic, an echo of the deeds of France: the first nucleus of the Italian Romanesque poetry. Encyclopædias, moralizings, diverse writings followed intended to diffuse in the language of the Fathers—grammatical, literary and scientific precepts, and to draw from physical and natural phenomena teachings, symbols, allegories. And side by side with the religious lyric, side by side with the great Christian and Church odes, the hymn of joy and, yet more in Italy than elsewhere, of Pride; side by side with the visions the liturgic mysteries in which are found the first slow germ of the Drama and the Stage.

The Troubadours gathered in Courts—the greater number from Provence after the crusade of the Albigenses; the Trouvères, scattered for the most part through upper Italy, in the castles of the Friuli, in the glorious Trivigian marches, spread among the Italians the Art and Poetry of France.

The former bore into Italy the gay science which flourished in Southern France: the subtle and shrewd doctrines woven around Love;

those exquisite rhymes of sentiment, form, and melody; that language of harmonious charm which appeared born with and for them. They thus promoted a numerous school of Italian troubadours who to the native dialects preferred the Provençal tongue.

The Trouvères, on the other hand, brought into Italy the kind of Poetry that flourished in upper France: romances; songs of deeds, seized on and re-elaborated in that series of poems which often penetrated by the imagery and sound of the dialect, scattered throughout the Paduan territory the fecund seed of Italian Romanesque Poetry.

Throughout a great part, then, of the period of her beginnings Italy had a rich and varied production in a tongue not her own, and as the poetry was Latin or Provençal or French, so also the Prose contained Latin ideas or was French in the doctrinal or narrative writings. And, meantime, the new common speech of Tuscany went on firmly elaborating itself amid attempts of literary idealization on the part of other dialects; exercising itself in translating, in remodelling specimens of Rome and France; in moral and rhetorical works, and it will be found in short space sufficiently developed and established to advance with certain step.

Two schools of Art outline themselves and take their stand from all this diverse production with their own distinct marks. One, Dante termed the Sicilian—not because all its representatives were Suavi, but because they drew their examples and impulse from the Swabian Court of Sicily not with any other intent than to reproduce in pallid and colorless form the lyric of Provence. The other school, divided in spirit and in attitude, in part courtly, in part bourgeois, in part scholastic, and in part common-speech, flourished in Central Italy with Guittone, the Aretino, who manifesting traces of the Sicilian rimatori, has the sentiment and the evident desire for fresh art diverse from the other and marked by the new mystical doctrines touching Love and by new philosophic and political reflections.

The Dante student already cited thinks little of the former school, and Dante despised for his poverty of inspiration and of style Guittone, who nevertheless labored to lift Poetry from the forms of troubadourism to a more serious classic style and even initiated the lyrical political conscience pervaded by a vague Sense of Italian National Consciousness. And Guittone seems to have been the master of Guido Guinezelli,

styled by Dante, "the Father of Sweet and Pleasing Rhymes."

These were the forerunners of him who was to lift Italian Poetry from the pedantic, the commonplace, and the imitative and establish it at one sweep on the pinnacle of the noble and the inspired.

Legends; prayers; chants; litanies; songs of praise; ballads; antiphonals (centresti) these are the poetical works of the first period: an output varied in character and manner; religious and political, amorous and moral; where prevail dialect forms; where in a mixed flock of diverse elements it is easy to distinguish literary idioms and attempts at and aspirations for a worthier use; where the speech is more frankly popular yet where on the other hand it strives to become nobler and more cultured.

Thus, if in upper Italy flourished an output richer with moral and didactic motive, in a tongue more related to that used in the Veneto; but penetrated with mixed elements: Latin, Provençal, French, Lombard; in Umbria flourished the sacred lyric and were diffused laudations of the church and of the discipline of Christ. These flourished in the greater part of Italy, while in Emilia; in Lombardy; in

Venice; in Tuscany flowered a poetry in substance and in form more clearly and broadly popular.

Happily, for the world, however unhappily for him in his time, Dante's lot was cast in one of the most turbulent; but also most advanced cities of Christendom—a city full of violence; but eager and advanced and on the threshold of the great Renaissance, which was to make it nearest to Athens in her prime of all the Cities of Modern times.

If Guelfs and Ghibellines fought, till the former overwhelmed the latter and banished them from Florence to return again and turn the tables on the former, and if the black Guelfs and the People fought till both were exhausted, Florence did not pause in her advance. Three times her walls had been extended and she had grown from a town of simple life to an emporium of commerce whose wealth and power were increasing by leaps and bounds. She had seized the primacy of Tuscany and was preparing to extend her power. With the genius that was the birthright of her people, no advance appeared beyond her reach. Her merchants became leaders and enlarged trade into commerce. They grew rich and they grew

powerful enough to rival and withstand the great nobles who had ruled supreme in the past, and to set up a Government strong enough to make them subject to the law and, when they violated Law, to raze their palaces to the ground. Amid the strife and clangor Italian Genius was rising like an Eagle soaring above the storm to face unblenchingly the sun. Learning and Art awakened; the great Doctors had absorbed it and endeavored to show that it might be reconciled with the Christian doctrine. Religion had been shown by men of saintly lives, like Dominic and Francis, to be still capable of reforming the world. The Arts, released from formalism, took on a new life and Literature held its own, to develop later, with Dante at the head, into a brilliancy unsurpassed in any age.

Dante was in his prime when at the end of the thirteenth Century the flowering of the new aspiration began to show its rich fruitage —when in 1294 the great Church of Santa Croce, the Westminster of Tuscany, was begun, and the foundations of the wonderful Duomo were laid by Arnolfo, to be crowned later by the masterpiece of Brunelleschi.

In 1298 Arnolfo began the imposing Palazzo Vecchio. And soon Giotto, the Italian Shep-

herd-lad, Cimabue's disciple, turned into the greatest Artist of his time, with a genius as many-faced as Michael Angelo's, was rearing his tower—"as graceful," to quote Lowell, "as an Horatian ode"—which has stood since then, unequalled in Majestic beauty by any similar work even in the land where Beauty has its home.

In 1300 Pope Boniface VIII held a Jubilee for Christendom to mark a new era.

It was amid such conflicting elements and such aspiring dreams that Dante grew to the realization of his powers. He was accustomed to the greatness of Art. Tradition tells how he sat on a stone and watched Giotto's Campanile rising in splendor to overtower the tallest dreams of Florentine ambition and for long the stone was known as "Dante's stone."

But those who planned and built these monuments of Italian genius, little knew that among them sat one who was to build with his art a monument far greater and more enduring than all the works of Giotto and Arnolfo and Brunelleschi and all their followers.

In Florence, in the atmosphere in which Dante was nurtured, it is, at least, to the modern student, not easy to distinguish between the influence on Dante of the Re-

ligious reform movement that was taking place about him; of the classical students who were beginning to circulate the Aristotelian philosophy with an ardor as though it were a new discovery; and of the modern poets who were beginning to sing of love and chivalry in a new key and with a new melody adapted to a new conception of romance. That all had an influence on his mind we have the proof in his work which not only reflected all the light that came from every source, but caught and by his genius transmuted it into a new effulgence in whose light all origin save his own is merged and lost. Genius, Art, Tradition he summons to his aid to enable him to present to the mind of man the full import of his vision of light.

In the Xth and succeeding Cantos of the Paradiso he girdles his progress with a shining band of Doctors and Sages who having inspired him and others on earth now, *vivi e viventi*, in ineffable light, hymn the Glory of God, among the Blessed with melody more divine even than their radiance. And what a starry band they are, who lovingly circled round the beauteous woman who fitted him for Heaven! He signalizes St. Thomas Aquinas,

the Angelical Doctor, who "Christianized Aristotle": brought his system to the support of Christianity; Albertus Magnus, the Doctor Universal, who taught and gave his disputations in Cologne and Paris and was the Angelical Doctor's Brother and Master; St. Dominic, who led the gracious flock in green pastures, and among them St. Francis, who rivalled him, if not in learning, at least, in piety and holy works; Peter the Lombard; Boethius, whose influence on the Poet is so marked as to be universally admitted; Bonaventura, the Seraphic Doctor, and many another teacher whose influence Dante seems thus to acknowledge in his mighty work.

Of the Poets, as has been already stated, he has spoken in another scene and he places them according to their rank. First, of course, for him Virgil, his Master and Guide; Homer the Monarch of Song; Horace, Ovid, Lucan, and, later on, Statius. He frankly intimates his debt to all.

II

DANTE AND FLORENCE

Of the four World Poets who, for certain supreme and far-reaching qualities and influences on the progress of the world, may be classed together, we know with certainty that in all that goes to make the poet supreme, the sad Florentine whose six hundredth anniversary the world last year attempted reverently to celebrate, is not less than the greatest.

There was no field, material or intellectual, which he did not explore, no region that the human mind had conceived of whether of Earth; of the Heavens above the Earth; of the waters or fire beneath the Earth; no field of human thought or speculation that he did not penetrate with his inspired imagination and on which he did not shed the light of his radiant intellect. Every emotion of the human heart; every passion of the human soul; every exercise of the human intellect; every flight of the

human imagination he has pictured for Humanity in terms and colors so supreme, so imperishable, as not only to be unexcelled, but as to render it well-nigh inconceivable that they can be excelled hereafter.

Although during much of these long years, the cultured of all nations have been striving to measure the scope and to do justice to the hallowed memory of him whose sacred ashes Ravenna proudly guards while Florence mourns; none can truly know what Dante was and is save the Italian.

What David was to ancient Israel; what Homer was to ancient Greece—where as will be recalled, "Seven Greek Cities fought for Homer, dead"; what Shakespeare has been and will continue to be to the English-speaking peoples whose thought and language he has crystallized in light—this and more, Dante has been and must continue to be to the Italian People. For he was, indeed, what that Statue erected at Trent proclaims him to have been: "The Father."

Certainly the Psalms of David were a well-spring for the Hebrew people and were sung and resung by their poets and taught to their children for generation after generation; the

songs that Homer chanted were known to Greeks throughout Greece and her colonies and eventually to the world; and the language of Shakespeare is still spoken and his thought is still current, at least among the native-born of the older States along the Atlantic seaboard.

But the language of Dante is even more the language of Italy. And that it is so, is due to Dante himself. He created the Italian language as it exists to-day. From fragments and dialects he formed a tongue and with it created so wonderful a work that all Italy accepted it and after six hundred years still uses it as its own. From the Italian bank of the Adige to the most southern point of Sicily, the phrases and turns of expression that Dante embalmed in the amber of his verse may be found in the mouth of the Italian. From the Minister in his cabinet to the farmer or shepherd or vine-dresser it may be found as a part of the ordinary currency of common speech. From the Premier to the Contadino a phrase from Dante carries with it an authority such as, at least, in time past, was among the pious the authority of a phrase from Holy Word. But more than this, he was the Moses of Italy who with the great vision of Liberty for Italy laid down the

Laws of Justice and Truth and led the Italians into the land of the new birth.[1]

No poet of whom history tells, save possibly Homer, had so marked and so universal an influence on the destiny of his country and of his People.

It is not, however, only the speech of Dante that one hears; it is the turn of phrase, his way of thinking also that has stamped itself on Italy. As the peasant or the artisan throughout Italy talks with Dante's wisdom as his argu-

[1] In Italy, owing to certain conditions in the past which need not be elaborated here, a part of the population by no means inconsiderable in numbers and much less so in character, would be unable to meet even the indifferent test of forty words of our anti-immigration laws. But among this part are a large contadino or country element who are the very backbone of Italian Industry and Thrift and who by their character; their industry; their vigor; their experience; their ability mental and physical, would prove a benefit to any country on which they might bestow their affection. Yet ignorance and misapprehension have excluded these from our shores while others in shoals have been admitted, simply because they could read twoscore words in some outlandish dialect, possibly learned for the express purpose of passing them. The reason why the literate-test is ineffective and—may I say?—absurd, is that in Italy as elsewhere the *malviventi* can nearly all meet the test while the body of the Analfabetti who are excluded would prove an asset of which any country might be proud. Character is better than the knowledge of forty words of print, or forty thousand words, and the failure to understand this is a fundamental error.

The very men who are excluded by the test may be able to cite reasons for any view they hold in pure Italian, jewelled with phrases taken from the jewel-casket of Dante Alighieri.

ment; so the philosopher and the statesman cites him as the authority and often as the final authority for his teaching. He has, in fact, a unique position in this regard and one may hear him quoted with the same respect that in our Country is given to a decision of the Supreme Court. From him as from His Holiness, the Pope, where he has spoken, there is no appeal; he is infallible. And what a range he has. The Earth, Hell and Heaven are all included in his boundless scope. Poeta dei poeti, call him the Italians; Creator of Creators.

"Dante," says one of his most noted commentators, "is a great part of Italy." It is true. And he might with equal truth have added, "Italy is a great part of the world."

Have you ever reflected what the world would have been without Italy? Think what it would have been without the courage and fortitude and persistence that defeated Carthage with its worship of Baal and its human sacrifices; without the Literature that has enriched Mankind; without the Law and Order that changed the Barbarian countries to the Northward, the Eastward, and brought them into subjection to some form of Civilization; without the pious fervor and consecration that

sent Roman Missionaries to Christianize France and England and later the great Germanic regions; without the spirit of informed adventure that brought from the East the Mariner's compass and taught its use to Europe, and yet later gave Spain the great Genoese to sail into the West beyond the pillars of Hercules, behind the setting sun and verify the dream that at some point the West and East would meet. Think what we should have been without the Religious orders that in the crisis of religion came from Italy—from that Rome

"Whose sword was once our guardian and is still our guide."

Think what the world would have been without the Art and the Literature of the Renaissance. Think what it would have been had Italy not freed herself from German-Austrian Rule in the great struggle of the Risorgimento; and had she not been able to hold the long eastern flank of the Allies: the 500-mile front from the Stelvio to the Carso, during this last vast war and then think that "Dante is a great part of Italy," and you may arrive at something of his august measure.

Many Italian biographers of Dante place his birth at such a distance from the battle of

Montaperti. This is sufficient for Italians; but I have felt that the conditions amid which this new force came into existence, greater than Swabian Emperors or Roman Pontiffs, required somewhat of explanation for Western hearers to give a true idea of that force and its accomplishment.

Dante was born toward the end of May, 1265, in the section of Florence near the Church of St. Martino di Vescovo. His family was not among the higher nobility, but was of the local gentry or lesser Florentine nobility and was connected with the Elisei family who prided themselves on being of ancient Roman stock. The family although Guelf was among those who were not included in the proscription then recently decreed by the victorious party of the Ghibellines. An uncle had fallen while bravely defending the Carroccio in the battle of Montaperti, and Dante's great-great-grandfather, Cacciaguida, whose wife was an Alighiera, from "the Green region of the populous Po" (whence Dante's name, Alighieri) had fallen in the Holy Land in 1147—a piece of family history in which Dante took great pride, as shows the picture that he gives of the old Crusader when he meets him in Paradise. Also

he does not hesitate to make Cacciaguida take pride even in Paradise of his most gifted and pious offspring who was enlisted to the death in a crusade which, if possible, was to cast into the shadow that in which Cacciaguida fell.

And the picture that Cacciaguida gives of Florence in his time stands as a portrait of antique virtue unsurpassed in Plutarch or Homer:

> "Fiorenza, dentro dalla cèrchia antica,
> Ond' ella toglie ancora e terza e nona,
> Si stava in pace, sòbria e pudica.
>
> Non avea catenella, non corona,
> Non donne contigiate, non cintura
> Che fosse a veder più che la persona," etc.[1]

The whole scene is well worth our time.

"Florence within her ancient ring of walls from which she still receives her tierce and nones stood, herself contained in peace, sober and modest still. She had no bracelet then, no coronet, no decked-out dames, no belts which might have been seen more than the person itself. Nor could a daughter's birth bring to her father fear, because the age and dowry would not yet outrun due measure.

[1] Paradiso, Canto XV, 97, etc.

She had no houses empty of the family: nor yet had Sardanapalus come to show that which could have been done within. Not yet had Montemalo been surpassed by your Uccellatoio; as it is surpassed in its rise, so it will be in its fall. I saw Bellincion Berti go about girded with leather and with bone, I saw his lady come from her mirror her face unpainted. I saw that one of Nerli and that del Vecchio remain contented with unlined pelt and their ladies at the spindle and thread. O happy women! Each one was certain of her sepulchre and none had yet through France a widowed bed. One kept her vigil studying of her cradle; consoling with baby-talk, which fathers and mothers at first so delight in. Another drawing the tress from the distaff, told stories to her family of Troy, of Fiesole and Rome. In that day a Cianghella or a Lapo Salterello would have been held as much a marvel as would have now Cincinnatus or Cornelia. To such a beautiful life of the citizen, to such safe citizenship, to such a pleasant Inn (*a così dolce ostello*) Mary, called upon aloud, gave me; and in your ancient baptistery I became at once a Christian and Cacciaguida."

His mother, Bella, died when Dante was a

child, and his father, who had married again, did not long survive her, and Dante appears to have spent a serious and pensive youth, studious and impressionable. He studied persistently and earnestly—arithmetic, geography, history, rhetoric, philosophy, theology—the last two were much interwoven in those days—and with them the art of Rhyme. Thus, as he boasts, he quickly made himself very learned.

At the age of nine years a spark touched his genius. At some festa his eyes lighted on a little girl, of about his own age, clad, as he tells us, in a soft red robe. He fell in love with Beatrice Portinari, a child of his own age, with a passion so great that it not only endured and effected an influence on his life, but endures through the ages and has effected an influence on the life of the world.

From this time, as he confesses—indeed, boasts, Love ruled his heart, his mind, his spirit, his life. Love became his Lord. "*Apparuit jam beatitudo vestra*," said Love to him and he knelt in adoration. But it was such a love as the world has rarely known—it was the pure devotion of a heart made for love sublime and immortal. It had not in it apparently aught of the earthy—it was wholly romantic

and wholly spiritual. Her glance intoxicated him; her greeting in the street lifted him to Paradise; the withholding of her greeting maddened him. Thinking upon her became his highest joy. He asked no other. He forgave his enemies. He felt that he wished no man ill, but all men good. This, indeed, was love. To her he wrote poems—always to her, even though in his shy mysticism, he dedicated them ostensibly to others. Dante became the Cavaliere Serviente spirituale of Beatrice Portinari. He afterward—between 1292 and 1294—married Gemma dei Donati, probably "the gentle lady," who rescued and solaced him; she bore him children: four sons and two daughters. But wedded by immortal bonds to her in whose honor he wrote his Vita Nuova and his Divine Comedy, he was lifted to Paradise and there, illumined by celestial light, he sang in divine strains, the glory and majesty and love of God.

He was the illustration of what Love—such Love—may accomplish when it informs the human soul; and though the gentle Gemma, whom he married, may later have repined that not she, but Beatrice inspired his genius and led him within the gates of Paradise, there is

no sound reason to believe that she had not his domestic love. At least, she did him and the world a great service.

But to return to the first step when the great light shined about him and he fell on his face and worshipped.

He was shy, proud, introspective, mystical, assuredly not lacking in self-esteem, yet lifted by his genius high above mere egotism, and in matters literary, even from the first, self-confident in the extreme, as witness—for the former, his account of his conduct before the companions of Beatrice; and for the latter, his addressing his first sonnet to all the poets who had sung of and were faithful to Love: A ciascun alma presa e gentil cuore.

He was at this time eighteen years of age, and his venture launched him into the great sea where he was to eclipse the deeds of all who sailed it then or have sailed it since.

To this, replied among others, Guido Cavalcanti, a poet some ten years older than himself, whom Dante calls his first friend and has immortalized.

He was happy in finding in Brunetto Latini: philosopher and man of Letters, a master whose learning and gifts, especially those of

sympathy with so richly and strangely endowed a pupil as young Alighieri, inspired his ambition and gave him the knowledge and understanding which led him, not only to the heights of Learning, but to the depths of the nature of things.

Also, doubtless, Brunetto Latini taught him something of the manner in which an exile should support his unhappy lot; for Brunetto, after Montaperti, was driven out of Florence by the victorious Ghibellines and like so many other illustrious exiles, sought and found in France the means of livelihood denied to him at home.

At the proper age Dante attended the famous University of Bologna and this became the most illustrious of Universities. We have a trace of his stay there in a famous simile in which he refers to Garisenda, one of the leaning towers of Bologna, and to the optical delusion caused by the clouds passing over it, and nearly six hundred years later we have evidence of Dante's hold on the Italian mind, when Giosuè Carducci, latest of the great Italian Poets, making the towers tell, in their antiphonal song, of the great sights they have witnessed in their time, after other great historic sights

has Assinella sing how she had seen young Dante:

"Dante vid'io levar la giovine fronte a guardarci,
E, come su noi passano le nuvole,
Vidi su lui passar fantasmi e fantasmi ed intorno
Premergli tutti i secoli d'Italia."

Dante saw I uplift his young brow to regard us
And as o'er us are passing the clouds
Saw I over him pass phantasm and phantasm and
About him throng all the ages of Italy.

Returned to Florence, young Dante, who, we are told, "participated in all martial exercises of his fellows," soon had an opportunity to prove his metal in other lists than those in which Simone dei Bardi had carried off the prize.

Florence was soon at war with her rival, Arezzo, and young Dante bore himself with honor on the victorious field of Campaldino, where in 1289 (June 11) he fought, mounted and in the front rank—an experience in which he later took just pride.

It was a year after this, in June, 1290, that Beatrice died and God transferred her residence from terrestrial to celestial light. Dante wrote upon her death a Latin epistle—his first,

and an Italian Canzone. The former begins with Jeremiah's Lament:

"How doth the City sit solitary she that was full of people."

The canzone contains the lines:

"So Beatrice is passed into high Heaven—
Into the Realm where the Angels have peace."

Ere long his excess of grief either passed, or tossed him on a tide where, skirting the dangerous coast of hapless love, in company with Forese Donati, a wild companion, Corso Donati's brother and, some say, Gemma's brother, he seems to have heard the siren voices of Pargoletta; Pietra; Violetta; Lizetta, and for a time to have plunged into dissipations which soon drew from his friend, Guido Cavalcanti, a sonnet of serious reproof, and which Dante himself later laments as a grievous memory.

Recalled from his lapse of loyalty to his loftier aims he resumed his deeper studies, his spiritual love resumed its sway, and his poetry while still inspired by the same power and pouring from the same source begins to run in a deeper channel. He seems now to have

turned seriously to Theology and to have given to its study all his intellectual force and an intenser devotion to the divine source of the Light of Justice and of Peace. Henceforth he becomes the champion of popular Right, as he interpreted it within the thrice-expanded walls of his beloved, if turbulent town. Beatrice becomes a beautiful symbol of Divine Grace that has sent Virgil, the symbol of learning and wisdom, to bring him safe through Hell and Purgatory and awaits him at the gate of Paradise to lead him into its blessedness. But this is an anticipation.

His first notable work, La Vita Nuova, written between 1292 and 1294, assembles his poems indited or dedicated to his Love. It is the work of a young man: a great poet, inspired by a lofty motive; a great passion, even a divine passion, to do honor to a great and noble love—a Love mighty enough to lift him, like St. Paul, whether in the spirit or in the body, who could tell?—above all that he had imagined, and open to him a vision loftier, vaster, more entrancing than aught he had yet conceived, to the accomplishment of which he would henceforth consecrate all his powers. It was written in Italian instead of in the classical

Latin that he had once employed, and for this Guido Cavalcanti was responsible. He counselled him and should have our gratitude, for the Poet followed the same course later when he settled down to his great epic.

As a collection of Love-poems it leads the world in that all great love-poems since that time have followed his shining path and contain a reflection of his light. Petrarch was his follower; the Elizabethans chose his measure. Every great poet since has given light reflected from his orb.

His last poem of that period—of that stage was a vision of a lady revealed to his Love in dazzling splendor, receiving honor in the widest sphere of Heaven.

"After this sonnet," he says in closing his first work, "there appeared to me a marvellous vision, in which I saw things that caused me to resolve not to speak more of this blessed one until such time as I should be able to indite more worthily of her and to attain to this I study to the utmost of my power, as she truly knows. So that should it be the pleasure of Him by whom all things live that my life continue for some years, I hope to say of her that which never hath been said of any woman."

And we are happy to know that his life continued not for some years alone; but into immortality. The consummation of this vision —the carrying out to its full fruition of this high resolve is the Divina Commedia; the picture of the world thrown on the screen of the Future; the progress of the Human soul guided first by lofty philosophy through Hell and Purgatory and then by exalted love through the paradise of God; the destiny of man under the Providence of God.

One singular, quaint thing about the Vita Nuova is the Poet's exegetical comment on the meaning and the form of each poem. Was it that he mistrusted his reader's complete comprehension of his meaning and desired to enlighten him, or that, assured of complete comprehension, he was happy to lay bare the very innermost recesses of his heart? It would appear the latter. For Dante wrote then for gentle hearts in which Love reigned as Lord and for those that had intelligence of Love. Love was to him then the Ruler of all hearts worth considering and to these he addressed himself in the assurance of full comprehension and sympathy. He would have them know not only that he loved supremely; but how he

came to write of Love. It was manifestly the manner and form of expression in which he took pride—the "Bello Stile." It was the word that he wrote of his love that was his chief joy. And let it here be noted that he ever links Love with the Spiritual. Even where he pictures beauty of form it is the picture of angels that he draws—the spiritual shines through them.

After his Vita Nuova Dante took part in the public affairs of his beloved city, and espoused, as every poet, save a Court Poet must, the cause of the People and of their Rights, joining the Physicians' and Apothecaries' Guild, a membership that was necessary for any man who aspired to influence in the rising Republic.

In the Vita Nuova, in one of the most beautiful passages of that quaint and interesting study of himself as affected by Love, he discloses quite incidentally the fact that he had some knowledge of Art.

On the first anniversary of the day on which the blessed Lady Beatrice was translated to the Life Eternal, he was engaged, he tells us, "in drawing an angel upon certain tablets. And while I was drawing it, I turned my eyes and saw beside me, men to whom it was meet

to do honor. They were looking on what I was doing and, as I was informed later, they had been there some time already, before I was aware of it. When I observed them I rose and saluted them saying, 'Another was with me just now and therefore I was thoughtful.'"

Also he had Knowledge of Music and loved it, according to Boccaccio, who knew those who had known him and treasured his memory. Indeed, Music was among the most enlightened peoples taught as an essential element of Education and as related to mathematics until it was banished therefrom by the prosaic and utilitarian Saxon, as a feminine accomplishment, unworthy of the "nobler sex."

Dante himself gives us to understand that he had studied Music as, for example, where in the Convito, or Banquet, he tells of his study of the Third Heaven and its movers, and coming to the discussion of the seventh Heaven, explains that by Heaven, he means Knowledge and he gives the list of the Seven Sciences of the Trivium and the Quadrivium, as Grammar, Dialectus, Rhetoric; Arithmetic, Music, Geometry, and Astrology. All these he had pursued with a lover's devotion.

A story is told of him that on a day as he was

passing along a street in the district of San Piero, he heard a smith as he worked in his shop singing one of his songs so badly that he fell into a rage and rushing in seized the tongs, hammer, and ironwork and flung them out in the roadway.

"What are you doing?" shouted the smith. "You are ruining my work."

"Well, not so much as you are ruining mine," retorted the poet. And, adds the chronicle, the smith had to content himself with singing of Lancelot and Tristan.

It would appear not an unjust inference from this story, though, possibly not a necessary one, that Dante had composed the music of the song no less than the words which the musical smith mutilated.

Another story illustrates both the time and the poet's standing. It relates how Dante passing along on a day clad in corselet and with "a gun-piece," as was the wont, came up with an ass-driver, who like the blacksmith of San Piero was singing one of Dante's songs and at the end of every stanza he shouted "arri," which was a call to speed-up his ass. Dante having overtaken him, annoyed at this gave the fellow a blow with his gun-piece and

when he turned around, said, "I did not write 'arri,'" whereupon the ass-driver poured out a torrent of insulting words and made an insulting gesture; but Dante only replied: "I would not give one of my words for a thousand of thine." This return of the insult was taken to show great moderation.

Inspired possibly by his new and deeper studies and possibly somewhat owing to his new position as the head of a family, he now becomes engaged in the public life of Florence and he plunges into the turbid stream with the same burning ardor that characterized his life in its every phase.

Since Campaldino, Florence had immeasurably increased in wealth, especially among the merchant class who had not the traditions of the old nobles; but soon imitated their arrogance and other failings. The city was now in a league with Genoa and Lucca renewable every year. This added greatly to her power and wealth and this wealth had resulted, as sometimes happens in other lands than Tuscany, not only in certain good consequences, but also certain evil consequences and, if we are to believe Dante, the loss of the old standards and the setting up, instead, of new or of no

standards at all; but only of show and display with personal indulgence of every kind. Women grew shamelessly immodest and went in public half-clad to a degree that led to public rebukes from the pulpit: men abandoned the old simple ways, and lived in extravagance far beyond their means and lost the virtues that had once brought them the respect of all.

The old became sharp and unscrupulous and the young became dissipated, flashy, and unreliable. The lower classes vied with those above them and, banded together against them, used iniquitously the upper hand which they had got —used it remorselessly as the others in their time had done; imprisoned or killed or drove them into exile; sacked their houses and confiscated their property; then fell to quarrelling among themselves and became the tools of unscrupulous leaders and demagogues of all classes until all lines of division were confused and they in turn were overthrown. Then, thus divided, they fell a prey to outside intrigue and, seeking outside aid, they were enabled to wreak their vengeance on their personal enemies; but became the victims of their hatred and found that they were but the prey of those whom they had called in to their rescue. Thus,

the people became debased; thus, Florence, even amid her growing splendor, fell the victim of her immoderation and folly.

It was in this state of affairs that Dante first appears in public life. He belonged to the Guelfs; but all the significance of party names was now nearly lost—even that of the Blacks and Whites was confused.

There was a law, as we have seen, which had been favored by the Pope of that time, which prescribed that only those who belonged to one of the Guilds should take part in public affairs. Dante enrolled himself in the guild "dei Medici e degli Speziali" and it is interesting to note that this guild was concerned with the dealing with books. He was enrolled in this guild simply as "Poeta." It must have been this guild that brought into power the later rulers of Florence who in her most magnificent period took therefrom their name, de' Medici. In this service the young scholar and poet soon rose to sufficient note to be chosen for a brief period a Prior, and to be sent as a member of a mission to San Gimignano, of the towers, a mission in which he was apparently successful, and he was later sent on other missions—to Rome and, so 'tis said, to

Hungary. Tradition reckons his missions as fourteen in all. But in all he was not successful, as for example, in that to Rome and in his last to Venice, to make Peace between that powerful Republic and his host, Guido da Polenta, in which his unsuccess is said to have caused his death. If this be so, it was a noble death.

He was in December, 1295, among the Savi, called in to arrange the rules for the next election of Priori and was in the Council of the One Hundred, where he spoke on the subject of an alliance with Pistoia.

In May, 1300, he was intrusted by the Signoria with a mission to San Gimignano and, perhaps, to other Communes as well, to request their participation in the approaching Congress called to renew the Guelf League.

Record of the Embassy to San Gimignano has been preserved. It was in the Spring of 1300, and the object of the Embassy was to announce that the Assembly was to be held for the purpose of electing a new head of the Guelf League of Tuscany and to urge the citizens of San Gimignano to send representatives. The record tells how, "On May the eighth the General Council of the Commonwealth and peo-

ple of San Gimignano having been invoked and assembled in the palace of the said commonwealth at the sounding of a bell, and by the voice of the crier according to custom, at the summons of the noble and valiant knight, Messer Mino de' Tolomei of Siena, the honorable Podestà of the Commonwealth and people of said city of San Gimignano . . . the noble Dante Alighieri, Ambassador of the Commonwealth of Florence, explained to the assembled Council on behalf of said Commonwealth, how it was expedient at that time for all the citizens of the Tuscan League to hold a parliament and discussion in a certain place for the election and confirmation of a new captain, and how further it was expedient that the high syndics and ambassadors of said city should assemble themselves for the despatch of said business." [1]

The Embassy proved successful, as the record states that the proposition of the Florentine Ambassador having been debated was approved and ratified by the Council.

Dante was married to a Donati and as we have seen, among his chosen companions in

[1] Translation of record cited by Paget Toynbee, *Dante Alighieri*, p. 73.

that period—possibly brief—of his declension, was the wild Forese Donati, himself a poet, the brother of the handsome, gallant, and ambitious Corso Donati, who led the Pistoian and Luccan reserves in the battle of Campaldino and who by flanking the Aretini hastened the great victory. Portraits of both of them are given by Dante in his immortal gallery: of Forese beseeching that his wife Nella will continue to pray for him; and of Corso dragged to death by his horse in the hour of his final defeat.

Corso's ambition had brought on him the suspicion and hatred of opponents powerful enough to drive him from Florence, and, repairing to Rome, he applied to the Pope and, it is related, urged him to bring Charles of Valois to Italy to subdue Florence.[1]

The Pope who had now succeeded to the Chair of St. Peter was Boniface VIII, astute, ambitious, able. He from the beginning cast envious eyes on the fair and wealthy province of Tuscany with its beautiful capital on the Arno and he was but too ready to listen to any suggestion that would bring Tuscany within his estates; within the patrimony of St. Peter.

[1] For this account as for much else I am indebted to the recent Study of Dante by Doctor Vittorio Turri.

The situation in Germany where an interregnum existed favored him and he had strong adherents: Black Guelfs in Florence as shown by the judgment passed there on three bankers who had plotted with him to bring him there; and now the fresh quarrels between the Cerchi and the Donati promised him the opportunity of a House divided against itself.

The quarrels culminated toward the end of June, when, during a procession on the vigil of St. John the Baptist, the Consuls of the guilds were assaulted, and to settle the quarrel the leaders of both sides were banished. Among them, on the one side, was Dante's friend, Guido Cavalcanti of the Whites, on the other, Corso Donati of the Blacks. Corso went to Rome and applied to Boniface, and he sent for Charles of Valois, who came with alacrity.

Dante Alighieri, Guelf as he had been and Ghibelline as he became, withstood boldly the encroachments actual and threatened on the Liberties of Florence. We find him stoutly withstanding the pretensions of the Successor of St. Peter, and when Boniface demands that the Republic aid him with her troops, we find him rising in his place and firmly moving, "*Quod de Servitio faciendo Domino Pape nihil fecit.*"

He was elected, doubtless, mainly because of his firm espousal of the rights of the Citizens of Florence, but possibly also because of his reputation as a poet, as one of the Priors for the term of two months from June 15 to August 15, a promotion to which he, in a letter, now lost, attributed all his succeeding woes.

In face of the imminent peril to their Liberties, both Florence and Bologna sent embassies to Rome to make submission to Boniface and Dante was among the envoys from Florence. The mission was a complete failure. Boniface would never have such another chance. The want of an Emperor on the throne left no rival there to contest his pretensions. The Blacks of Tuscany might never again be so ready to espouse a foreign cause; to submit so unreservedly to his demands and to deal so completely with his opponents.

So Charles of Valois was sent for "to compose the troubles"; was invested at Rome with the Crown of Sicily, and on the 1st of November, 1301, entered Florence with his cavalry amid the acclaims of the fickle populace and the triumphant shouts of the Black Guelfs. He came, says Dante, *Con la lancia con la qual Giostrò giuda.*

The victors were not long in settling their scores. Proscription and prosecution began promptly and were pushed remorselessly.

We have from the pen of Dino Compagni, who was himself one of the Savi during Dante's Priorate, a vivid picture of the events of that tragic time in Florence not unworthy of Dante himself.

It was a veritable Reign of Terror. Among the victims, Dante Alighieri, with four others: Gherardino Diedate; Palmieri Altovi; Lippo Becchi; Folanduccio Orlandi, after having been summoned and cried by a trumpet through the streets of the city and suburbs of Florence for barratry, illicit gain, iniquitous extortion of money and goods, were, on the 27th of January, 1302, sentenced in contumaceam quod darent sive expenderent contra summum Pontificem et Dominum Carolum pro resistensa sui adventus, vel contra statum pacificum civitatis Florentiæ et partis Guelforum, and was condemned to pay a fine of 5,000 florines; to make restitution of all things illegally extorted, and should they not pay within three days, their goods were to be confiscated and their property sacked. Naturally, they did not appear. They knew better than to do that. Dante himself

is said to have been in Rome. It is hardly likely. And so on the 10th of March, some forty days later, they were taken to have confessed the crimes charged against them and a second sentence was passed on them that should any one of them be found at any time within the jurisdiction of Florence, he should be burned alive, sic quod moriatur.

It was a savage sentence that Boniface had passed, to burn Dante and his friends to death, should they be caught. But Dante changed the hunter to the quarry. He has burned Boniface in Hell throughout the Ages. Six hundred years later, a successor of Boniface has reversed the sentence of his predecessor. I wonder, could Dante recast his sentence, would he reverse it? He held that God's wrath was sweetened to him by the foreknowledge that his punishment was eternal.

Happily for us the stern exactions of Public Life had not completely weaned the Poet from his first and supreme Love. They only deepened his channel and broadened his current. And we know that when he left Florence and started on that long exile which he was to mourn for nearly twenty years and Florence forever after, he left behind him already written

possibly seven Cantos of the poem which was to make his name immortal. Happily for the world, it was conceived and started in the midst of scenes so vital, so replete with passion that it could not but itself absorb and reflect the vivid passion of the action amid which it was cast.

Born with unequalled genius in a time when all things—however vexing to his soul—worked together to bring that genius to its supreme climacteric, he passed through experiences physical, intellectual, and spiritual which bore him to the deepest Hell and lifted him to the highest Heaven.

He studied as a student deeply; he fought as a soldier bravely in the front ranks; he served as a public man zealously; he went on embassies; he contended as a free citizen earnestly; he withstood all imposition or attempted imposition firmly—perhaps, furiously; he was defeated, driven forth; libelled, exiled, defamed, persecuted; his enemies were powerful Kings and Popes; his home was sacked, his property confiscated, himself condemned to be burnt alive should he be caught on his native soil; he lived and died an exile, poor, proud, eating the bitter bread, climbing the steep stairs of others

—till he died. And all the time he was bearing in his soul the immortal vision that made the women of Verona point to him and exclaim: "Ecco l'uomo che è stato nell' inferno." ("Look, there's the man who has been in Hell.") Ah! yes, the man had been in Hell; but the poet had also been in Paradise.

If Dante, however, was shy he had too just an appreciation of his gifts not to be proud. His lofty self-confidence in his powers rings throughout his work.

He tells in the Paradiso (Canto XXII) that it was from the stars under which he was born —the Gemini—that he derived his intellect—his genius. He comes to them again in Paradise and invokes their aid:

> "O gloriose stelle, o lume pregno
> di gran virtù, dal quale io riconosco
> tutto, qual che si sia, lo mio ingegno.
>
> A voi devotamente ora sospira
> l'anima mia per acquistar virtute
> al passo forte, che a se la tira."

But we have his portrait by Villani, a contemporary of Dante: "This man, although a layman, was a great scholar in almost every science; he was a most excellent poet, philosopher and rhetorician; perfect as well in com-

position and versifying as in speaking; a most noble orator. . . . This Dante by reason of his learning was a little haughty, shy and disdainful and like a philosopher almost ungracious; he knew but little how to deal with the unlettered."

In this connection it is well to give Boccaccio's portrait of him: "Our Poet was of medium height, his face was long, his nose aquiline, his jaw large and his lower lip protruded somewhat beyond the upper, a little stoop in the shoulders; his eyes rather large than small, dark of complexion, his hair and beard thick, crisp and black, and his countenance always sad and thoughtful. His garments were always dignified, the style such as suited ripeness of years. His gait grave and gentleman-like and his bearing, whether in public or private, wonderfully composed and polite. In meat and drink he was most temperate. He seldom spake save when spoken to, though a most eloquent person. In his youth he delighted in music and singing and was inclined to solitude, familiar with few and always assiduous in study so far as he could find time for it. Dante also had a marvellous capacity and most tenacious memory."

The anecdotes about him, except those suggested in his own work which testify his humility before God and his Love, portray him, all save one, as a man of supreme intellect, proud and self-contained, as is natural to one who in his thoughts lived in fellowship with that high school of song and the other Grandi whose portraits he has hung over the altars where the human spirit goes for absolution.

There is a story of him that can only be appreciated if it be understood that the term "animal" is as deadly an insult as can be applied in Italy to any one—which tells how on an occasion when he was in the Duomo wrapped in meditation and devotion he was interrupted by an atheist, a pedantic and garrulous person for whom he had little esteem. He turned to him and asked, "What is the greatest animal?" "Why," said the other, "the elephant," and began to quote Pliny as authority for the fact; but Dante cut him short, saying, "Go away, elephant."

Another story of him tells how being once in Verona at the table of his protector and patron, Can Grande, his host—or, some say others of the guests—seeing him greatly abstracted attempted to play a practical joke on

him and had a servant take the bones from the plates of the other guests and place them beside Dante, who was too abstracted to observe it until Can Grande himself called the attention of the other guests to the evidences of the Poet's vast appetite. Dante's retort to his tormentors was: "It shows, at least, that I am not as great a dog as some others or I should have eaten the bones."

Yet another story illustrative of the Poet's pride and of the times is given. His fame having reached the Court of King Robert of Naples, the poet was invited to visit him and travelled down from Ancona to do so. On his arrival he was shown to a place at the foot of the royal table on account of the shabbiness of his garments. His royal host having taken no notice of him, when dinner was ended, Dante immediately left the palace and started back on his return to Ancona whence he had come. The King after dinner having taken his rest inquired about Dante, and having learned that he had left and started back on his return to Ancona, sent messengers after him who overtaking him on the road brought him back to King Robert's Court, where Dante having attired himself in a richer robe, a seat was pro-

vided for him at the head of the table near that of his royal host. During the meal Dante began to smear on his robe gravy and wine, whereupon the King rebuked him, demanding why he should act in so idiotic a manner. To this Dante replied that he was the same person who had been seated at the foot of the table when he was in poorer raiment and that as the seating in his present place was evidently intended for his richer robe he thought the occasion should be availed of and the robe fed rather than himself. Upon this the King, according to the story, feeling the justice of the rebuke presented him with a rich robe and treated him thereafter with high consideration.

We have his outward semblance painted, according to tradition, by the greatest Master of his time, his friend, Giotto, in a fresco on a wall of the Bargello, a fitting setting for the Poet of Poets. Ignorant hostility covered and lost it once. It was actually painted over. Time and the futile desire to better it have dimmed it; but even so, it stands mellowed and, perhaps, more representative of the pensive mystic who through the ages passes by in calm consciousness of his lofty detachment from all that is common and unclean.

DANTE, FROM ORCAGNA'S FRESCO OF THE LAST JUDGMENT IN THE STROZZI CHAPEL, STA. MARIA NOVELLA

There are numerous other putative portraits; as, for example, the full-length portrait by Michellino in Santa Maria del Fiore; the portrait by Amico di Sandro and other supposititious effigies; but this is the one that the world has chosen by unanimous voice as the Poet. This is that Dante, after he had shaven his curled, dark beard, or possibly before he let it grow, pictured by Boccaccio.

A century later, Leonardo Bruni tried his hand at giving "the life and habit of the man." "He was a man of great refinement; of medium height and with a pleasant, but deeply serious face. He spoke seldom; and then slowly; but was very subtle in his replies. Courteous, spirited and full of courage, he took part in every youthful exercise. He omitted naught of polite and social intercourse. It was remarkable that though he studied incessantly none would have supposed from his happy manner and youthful way of speaking that he studied at all."

But as there are other effigies of Dante than Giotto's proud, calm figure on the Bargello wall, so there is another description. Villani, who knew him, says in his chronicle: "This Dante from his knowledge was somewhat pre-

sumptuous, harsh and disdainful, like an ungracious philosopher; he scarcely deigned to converse with laymen. But for his other virtues, science and worth as a citizen it seems but reasonable to give perpetual remembrance in this our chronicle."

Such appeared Dante to his contemporaries and those who followed soon after his time. To us he is known also and, mentally, even better than to them, for the years that have mellowed his portrait have fixed it forever in the Gallery of the Immortals.

Of the other alleged portraits of Dante which are very numerous, discussions may be found in several learned works. The Pretended Death-mask and the Naples Bust have been measured and accepted or rejected from generation to generation; and whatever the sages may decide, the public has accepted at last the bust as the effigy of the stern poet of the Inferno.[1]

[1] Those portraits which date from Giotto to Raphael have been fully discussed in a careful and laborious study by Richard Thayer Holbrook, and later by Professor Frank Jewett Mather, Jr. Many of the greatest of the Italian Masters tried their hands at reproducing the semblance of the greatest painter of them all—Signorelli, some twenty times, Raphael, not so often, but several times, each endeavoring to do honor to the greatest of the poets, who stands in their frescoes sternly pensive, crowned with his immortal laurel and, like the eagle, grasping the symbol of his immortal power.

III

DANTE'S PROSE

Dante's relation to Literature, however, even though posterity is mainly interested in and concerned with his presentation of the passion of the Human soul through his incomparable poems, is by no means confined to such expression. He undertook to analyze and to lay down the philosophy of the relation of the expression of thought and passion to language, both in prose and verse; and both in Latin and the Lingua Volgare. He began by maintaining that the real power and beauty of a tongue are tested rather in its prose than in its poetry. In the beginning he had been the champion of the Classical Latin against the Italian Vernacular which he then held was but fit to serve the former as a handmaid. But in practice he was ere long the best exponent of the latter. In its use he emancipated the handmaid and, endowing it with the power of freedom, enriched it with the strength and the grace of eloquence in prose and passion in poetry. He

may be said to have made the Italian Language and has been said by so great an Italian as Mazzini to have made it.

In the Vita Nuova he gives his views—in Italian—briefly on the subject of the relative use and value of prose and verse. (Vita Nuova, XXV.)

In the Convito he has a treatise on Literary Criticism and defends with his customary power, the use of the popular or vernacular tongue in preference to the language of scholars, though he declares the structure of the latter is more beautiful.

In his treatise, De Volgari Eloquentia, he goes deeper and proceeds to analyze more fully the languages and their capacity for expression. It is said to be the first work on Romance philology.

The Vita Nuova is the work of a young man, absolute in his surrender; arrogant in his assumption of singularity of devotion, soaring unconsciously into airy regions of sentiment, revelling in abject submission to Love. It has the marks of youth stamped on it and all through it in its frank statement of entire surrender to its supreme commander: Love—its passionate and egotistic grief, its ingenuous

demand of sympathy. Its unguarded and untrammelled and boundless protestations of love are all the natural fruit of youth. But it is not only not the less impressive for this, it is all the more impressive in its sincere and unconscious assertion of unparalleled love and sorrow. It has all the freshness of youth—of immortal youth and immortal love. It is as a love-story and as an analysis of a love-stricken heart unparalleled in Occidental literature. And since that time all the historic love-poems have been moulded on its imperishable lines and have in a measure reflected something of its immortal spirit.

In the Convito, written years later when Dante had grown older by perhaps ten years, when measured by time, and much older than that as measured by experience of well-nigh all the ills that can assail a man, "Toil, envy, want, the patron and the jail," or worse, for he had lost home, family, and was under sentence of death in its most shameful and cruel form in his native city, he wrote a further chapter in his spiritual experience and, as became its new subject, in a different strain.

"If in the present work," he says, "which is called 'The Banquet,' the discourse be more

virile than that of the New Life, I do not therefore intend to discredit the latter in any respect; but much more to confirm that work by this, seeing how reasonably it behoves that that should be fervid and impassioned, this temperate and virile . . . for in the former, I spoke at the entrance of my youth, in the latter, youth has gone."

He was now on his way to his great achievement and his soul, chastened by misfortune and uplifted by aspiration to the Heavens, was following the light of philosophy and was facing toward the high goal, where having, through whatever sorrows, through whatever toil, been led, it was to find Divine Grace waiting to lead him into the light to that which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man. By the time his Love had deepened, had broadened; had risen and soared on the wings of a divinely inspired imagination until, immeasurable by any dimension, it took in, in mystical comprehension, the universe and was become the servant at the feast of inspired reason.

The Convito, or Banquet, was never completed. It was planned by Dante to contain, in an introduction and fourteen other parts,

commentaries on his Canzoni, a form of poetry affected by the Italian Poets and, as it were, the parent of the English Ode. The fourteen commentaries were also to cover the broad field of Philosophy supported by all the learning of the age. We have, however, only four of the designed fourteen parts, the Introduction and three other parts.

In this work he selects the common Italian tongue, and in the first part, he justifies its employment as against the Latin; but his best argument is his own use of it. Italians hold it the first piece of true Italian prose and, in its way, it stands to them somewhat as Milton's prose stands to Englishmen of culture—in a place to itself. In the three parts following the introduction he discusses three of his own Canzoni, Nos. VI, VII, and VIII. They are all replete with learning and cover so large a field of discussion and imagination that one wonders what the other eleven would have contained.

Presently after the Convito came the incomplete Educational treatise on the philosophy of the Italian Language: De Volgari Eloquentia, of which only two of the four books which he obviously intended to write have come down to us. It probably followed the Convito

and it was written in Latin, the language of Scholars and manifestly for Scholars. In it he gives his views on the language of Poetry and Prose. It deals with the fourteen Italian dialects, most of which he was destined to banish from Italy, all of which to modify, by incorporating the choicest parts of them in one supreme work in which all Italians take equal pride. He discusses with absorbing interest the metre of the Canzone, a form of Poem in which he had perfected himself—and of which he makes Bonagiunta of Lucca, whom he meets in Purgatory, declare him the inventor. (Purgatory, Canto XXIV.)

The work came to a stop in the middle of the XIVth Chapter of the Second Book in which he was discussing the structure of the stanza; but from what cause he abandoned it, is not known. The most probable conjecture would appear to be that he merely wearied of it, or that he was called off by some exigency of his uncertain life as a stranger in a foreign country and that later more important or more interesting subjects engrossed his thoughts.

In the Second Book he casts a light on his conception of his own work. Referring to the themes that others have dealt with in the vul-

gar tongue he declares that his own theme has been Righteousness.

Among the writings of Dante known to us are eleven letters, all probably written in Latin, though a quotation from one of his Letters is made in Italian by Villani, who says, "these are Dante's very words."

Besides these there were a number of other letters now lost, which are referred to by his earlier biographers. Three of those among others written during his exile, are characterized as "Noble Letters," by Villani. These were addressed respectively to the Government of Florence reproaching her for his exile; to the Emperor Henry, then besieging Cremona, reproaching him for his delay, and to the Cardinals urging them to put an end to the interregnum after Pope Clement V and elect an Italian Pope. This letter is lost.

These letters were not the simple expression of mere social correspondence. They were for the most part serious disquisitions on subjects that engrossed his thoughts and bore on the development of the thought of the Time.

They were, in a way, like the epistles of St. Paul, only more like pronunciamentoes, and some were possibly suggested by them. At

least, it is beyond question that Dante had St. Paul's experience rooted deep in his mind and must often have felt the influence of the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

These epistles were mainly treatises or manifestos;[1] but some were concerned with his own affairs. But so were St. Paul's epistles. One, that he wrote as a young man on the death of Beatrice, mentioned in his Vita Nuova, has not come down to us. It was addressed to the principal personages of Florence. Others also have been lost. In order, those that we have are: Epis. I. To Cardinal Nicolo da Prato; II. To a Pistoijean Exile; IV. To Marchese Moroello Malaspina; V. To the Peoples and Princes of Italy; VI. To the Florentines; VII. To the Emperor Henry; VIII. To the Empress Margaret; IX. To the Italian Cardinals; X. To a Gentleman of Florence; XI. To Can Grande della Scala.

Besides these, there is the other letter to Guido da Polenta, giving an account of his mission to Venice, the authority of which, however, is questioned, as it well may be, at least,

[1] P. Toynbee, *Letters of Dante Alighieri. Le Lettere di Dante;* Arnaldo Gonti, Milano.

by the Venetians, for it presents a picture of them at that time as far as possible from the popular idea of their culture and magnificence.

From the day that Dante left Florence in the shadow of the imminent judgment of death and attainder against him, we have no certain knowledge of his movements during some time. We have only fleeting and uncertain glimpses of him, as he appears and disappears spectre-like at this point or that, at this castle or that court, though hardly a mountain or *paese* existing in North Italy but points with pride to the rock or parapet where Dante dreamed. It may well be that he wandered far and wide. We only know that Fortune had dictated judgment against him.

The Italian scholars who have traced every footstep and sifted every tradition of the great Master, assert that he was at the Conference of San Godenzo, a solitary church in the Mugellan Alps, where the Bianchi and the Ghibelline exiles assembled on June 8, 1302, to plan the Mugellan war on Florence which ended in the defeats of Pulicciano and Lastro; that he was, at least, cognizant of the fierce attack made

by the Neri in September, 1302, under Moroello Malaspina on the Bianchi under Serravalle,

> "Con tempesta impetuosa ed agra
> Sopra Campo Piceno."

In that autumn he was in Forlì inciting Scarpetta degli Ordalaffi to engage in the second Mugellan war against Florence, and they say that he later participated, at least, by counsel, in the third and last war that bears that name. But, alas for him, he was never to see again his bel San Giovanni.

During his sad wanderings of several years hither and yon from town to town and castle to castle of nobles who received the exile already illustrious; his vagrancy which, as he tells, brought him the "humiliation of appearing 'vile' in the eyes of some who had perhaps imagined him 'per alcuna fama in altra forma' ('through a certain renown, in another guise')" brought also, he relates, the greater humiliation of making less prized all his work; both that already done and that which remained to do.

Between 1306 and 1308 he was the guest of the Counts Guidi in the Casentino; then of the Marchese Malaspina, both families of wealthy

nobles with sundry castles, renowned "per uso e natura," "per il pregio della borsa e della spada."

Then he found securer refuge and hospitality with the Scaligeri of Verona. He refers to it as his first refuge:

> "Lo primo tuo refugio e il primo ostello
> sarà la cortesia del gran Lombardo
> che in su la scala porta il santo uccello."

It was while under the protection of the great Lombard that, according to Boccaccio, Villani and Benvenuto da Imola, the Exile was able to extend his wanderings not only throughout Lombardy but as far as Paris.

Also it is believed that during these years the Exile visited Venice and, possibly, the regions beyond washed by the gulf of Guarnaro which he was later to establish, at least, in Italian minds as the confine of Italy.

It was the 27th of November, 1308, that the Seven Electors chose Henry of Luxemburg Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. The Pope confirmed the Election and promised to crown him in Rome. Henry marched into Italy and by Epiphany of 1311 was in Milan and received the homage of Dante's friends: the great Ghibelline nobles like the Scaligheri

and the Malaspini. Dante's hopes revived. He had already addressed his famous epistle to the Lords and peoples of Italy calling on them to arise and avail themselves of the accepted time—of the day of Salvation. But although those who, like Dante, favored the Holy Roman Empire idea even with a Germanic head were powerful, there were plenty of others who espoused the other view, and among them Dante's enemies who still ruled Florence, and shut her gates against Henry, as many other cities did.

In April (18), 1311, Dante addressed his epistle to the Emperor invoking him to hasten to subdue Florence, the fox that drank neither of the Po nor the Tiber, the pest that was breeding distemper in his flock. And a little later Dante addressed his fiery epistle to the Florentines themselves, calling down on them all the judgments of offended Heaven.

Florence, meantime, was strengthening her walls and endeavoring also to strengthen herself within by instituting reforms. A partial amnesty was declared (September 2) but those not true Guelfs were excepted, and Dante was excepted by name.

The consequences will be recalled by all interested in that period. Henry repaired to Rome where he was crowned June 12, 1312, in St. John Lateran, because the Leonine City with St. Peter's was held by the Orsini and Colonnas. Clement V, now removed to Avignon under the protection of the Angevins, ordered Henry to desist from his proposed expedition against the King of Naples and to leave the estates of the Church. The Emperor replied with spirit and the breach was completed. Henry proceeded finally against Florence and the other cities of the Guelf League which resisted his enterprise, but died at Buonconvento near Siena, August 24, 1313, after a brief illness caused, as many believed, by poison. So fell Dante's last hopes.

Pope Clement V died the year following, 1314, and, the year following that, Philip the Fair of France passed to his final account—also he passed to his final account in history written by Dante's avenging pen, which terms him, il mal di Francia, il nuovo Pilato, for having abandoned to the hatred of his enemies at Anagni, the Vicar of Christ and thrown against the order of the Templars his veiled cupidity. Later on, for a time the Ghibellines looked up

once more and Dante with them, especially when the young prince, Can Grande, showed the

"favelle della sua virtute in non curar d'argento, nè d'affanni,"

and won victories over Padua worn down by the long struggle with Vicenza, and when Ugoccione della Faggiola, who had united the lordship of Lucca to that of Pisa, inflicted on August 15, 1315, at Monte Catine a tremendous defeat on the Guelf party.

It was in this year that some mitigation of Dante's sentence and that of his sons, had been carried in Florence, and permission to return had been granted the exiles on the humiliating terms which Dante so firmly rejected, whereupon the new sentence was passed November 6, 1315, against the Ghibellines and rebels condemning them to be drawn "ad locum justitiæ et ibi eisden caput a spatulis amputetus, ita quod penitus moriantur." The victories of the gallant Ghibelline chief, Ugoccione della Faggiola, had not eventuated in the final success which had been hoped for, and Dante, wearied and seeking peace and quiet to complete his great work, which was to win him more far-reaching victories than either that of Can

Grande or of Ugoccione, received and accepted the invitation of Guido Novello da Polenta, Lord of Ravenna, and with him found a refuge for the last three years of his life. With him in Ravenna in these last years were his sons, Pietro and Jacopo, both, like him, under sentence of death in Florence, and his daughter, to whom he had given the beloved name of Beatrice. These last years during which the poet "gave himself with intense labor to completing his Poem; to avail himself of the counsels and offices of the Polentano, who likewise indulged in poetry and art; in arguing now seriously, now keenly, of the style and developments with his devoted friends who like Pier Giardini of Ravenna, Dino Pierini, a Florentine, Feduccio de' Milotti, the physicist and philosopher of Certaldi (Boccaccio's fellow citizen), Bernardo Canaccio, the Archbishop Rainaldo Concoreggio, who had frequented the court of Pope Boniface, and perhaps Giotto, called at that time from Ferrara to paint in the Church of San Francesco—tempered the bitterness in the great soul of the exile with hope of a no distant return to his Patria."

In these years immersed in an atmosphere breathing of the pines and the sea, and passing

daily among scenes which recalled to him the works of three great Revannans: Romoaldo Pier, Damiani and Pietro Peccatore and that of the "Emperor, just and wise, who amid the splendor of the mosaic, appeared to call him with clear voice, Cesare fui e son Giustiniano," he, as if to conclude better his work as poet in the traces and in the idioms of that author and master with whom he gloried to have begun it, addressed two eclogues in Latin to Giovanni del Virgilio, two eclogues whose reposeful and idealic sweetness attested how a stormy life was now sealing its close with a placid and serene sunset. The Bologna humanist, to whom were known the name and the genius of Alighieri and the cantos of the Commedia already circulated, had written him toward the last of 1320, an epistle saluting him as the master and urging him in a friendly spirit to leave the humble vulgar speech and the kingdom of the dead and to sing in the language of the Fathers, the deeds of the living. And he invited him to Bologna where he himself would be proud to present him to the schools and masters, his illustrious temples bound with odorous Peneian garlands.

I would that I could give the entire corre-

spondence with Dante's reply in the Virgilian manner, but this must be left with much more that I would give. It all, however, finds a certain echo in Dante's poem, or, perhaps, we might say the aroma of it all is there, as, for example, the stanzas which Turri quotes, as he finds therein the impress and traces of the long wanderings which were to come to an end in Ravenna on that 14th day of September, six hundred years ago.

No exile in all history appears to have suffered so much from his banishment. No imprisoned eagle ever beat so fiercely against the bars of his cage as Dante beat against the bars that shut him out from Florence. He fought against it so long as he had strength—he caught at every chance to break down the wall that caged him in the outer world and to the day of his death he raged against the sentence. And yet when the sentence after long years was revised in 1316 and he was granted leave to return on conditions that appeared to him, as they were, in fact, ignoble, he rejected the proffered pardon with righteous scorn.

In one of his letters—to a churchman of Florence—he writes as a gentleman should. He says:

"From your letter which I received with due respect and affection I observe how much you have at heart my restoration to my country. I am bound to you the more gratefully, inasmuch as an exile rarely finds a friend. . . . Your nephew and mine has written to me, what indeed had been mentioned by many other friends: that by a decree concerning the exiles, I am allowed to return to Florence, provided I pay a certain sum of money and submit to the humiliation of asking and receiving absolution; wherein my Father, I see two propositions that are ridiculous and impertinent. I speak of the impertinences of those who mentioned such conditions to me, for in your letter guided by judgment and discretion there is no such thing. Is such an invitation then to return to his country glorious to Dante Alighieri after suffering in exile almost fifteen years? Is it thus they would recompense innocence which all the world knows and the labor and fatigue of unremitting study? Far from the man who is familiar with philosophy be the senseless baseness of a heart of earth that could act like a certain Ciolus and imitate the infamy of some others by offering himself up, as it were in chains.

"My Father, this is not the way that shall lead me back to my country. I will return with hasty steps if you or any other can open to me a way that is not derogatory to the fame and honor of Dante. But if no such way can be found then Florence I shall never enter. Shall I not everywhere enjoy the light of the sun and stars and may I not seek and contemplate in every corner of the earth under the canopy of Heaven consolation and delightful trust without first rendering myself inglorious, nay, infamous, to the People and Republic of Florence? Bread I hope will not fail me."

It was the sentence of 1302 that caused Dante's worldly ruin; destroyed his happiness, and endowed the world with its greatest epic and him with perpetual fame. For three years he vainly strove to overthrow the power that made him an exile, living on the bitter bread of others' charity and climbing the painful stairs of others. At length, wearying of the violence of those about him; the vile and worthless company with whom the exile must consort, he settled down to hopeless exile and on that bitter bread and by those painful stairs he climbed to an eminence from which he might laugh to scorn all who had embittered him.

Great visions sometimes come to exiles shut off and isolated from the moral things of Life: John on Patmos; Francis in his cell; Dante in his Exile's Study; Grotius in his garret. And now a great vision was coming to this exiled Florentine and changing him into an Italian; the Spirit of Justice was illuminating his soul and from his own consciousness of Right, he was evolving the fundamental laws not alone for Italy, but for all Mankind.

In his De Monarchia he attempted the high task of presenting the scheme of Government of the world on fundamental lines of Justice and Wisdom, as he conceived them.

He was now engaged in the endeavor not only to bring about in the only way that appeared feasible to him a Universal Peace founded on the principles of Justice for all; but to formulate a plan which should perpetuate such a peace. If he accepted the established forms of Government of his time and started with postulates of a Divine Order of Human Government manifested in an Imperial form which later experience has finally discarded, it does not affect the greatness of his conception. His aim was the same with that which we have seen attempted with such far

vision and lofty spirit in our own day.[1] The supreme Head was to be supreme only that he might effect Justice. His power was to be unlimited only that it might defeat Evil and establish Right. Under this Head all States should be equal and independent one of the other, and thus all should be free.

Mark this. If trammelled, as we may think now, with the old half-childish ignorances and

[1] If a personal allusion in this connection may be pardoned I will relate an instance of what I refer to: When in the Winter of 1916–17 the President of the United States, having matured his plan for our entering the war took, as will be recalled, a number of steps to warn the warring Countries of his intentions and to explain to those who shall come after us the grounds of his actions, he had a great vision which he believed might be realized should all America, actuated by the high motives which actuated him and which were almost universally professed, follow his lead. It was no less than—first, the lifting of the contest to the plane of Right by the announcement of the principles on which America entered the war, and secondly, the Disarmament of the Nations and the prevention of any such future world-wars by the united action of the combination of nations and peoples of the world in a League to be formed for that purpose.

Preliminary to such a step as was contemplated a number of communications were addressed to the several Governments announcing the President's intentions. Among these one was sent to the American Ambassador to Italy to deliver to the Royal Italian Government. This was duly done, the notes being handed to the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Baron Sidney Sonnino. The note to which reference is now made having been read aloud with absorbed interest by the Minister, he fell to pondering it in silence and presently I asked:

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"It is very high," said he reflectively.

superstitions of his time, he deals with physical and material elements in his vision, he yet uses them but as symbols of the spiritual idea he formulates.

If Dante's dream and scheme were, however, different from that which under the menace of well-nigh world-wide war recently drew for a brief period the minds of men to a vision of world-wide Peace, they were only different as conditions were different. His scheme was for a World at Peace under an Emperor, supreme and

"Do you think it Utopian?"

"No, not Utopian; but perhaps somewhat premature . . . we may not yet be ready for it . . . but perhaps some time." He paused; reflected; and then said—and this is why I am relating the incident:—

"Dante had some such idea. In his De Monarchia he promulgates his idea. In fact," he added, "some years ago I delivered a conference on the VIth Canto of the Paradiso and discussed a little this matter. I shall be glad to see the way to work out the plan practically; and the mind that conceived this must have worked out something to put it into practical operation."

I have given the substance of what was said on this point by the able Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, than whom I saw no abler Statesman in Europe during the war and few who approached him. Indeed, to my mind, although he had certain individual failings, as being too reticent and aloof, he was the ablest public man in Europe who came under my observation during the war.

I returned to the Chancery and telegraphed home a despatch giving a report of Sonnino's reception of the Note, and I reported what he said of Dante's views, and added this: "When Dante is quoted here he is quoted as the highest authority."

benevolent—so supreme that he could covet no more power; for there would be none to covet; so benevolent that he must use his supremacy for the good of all.

It was not merely a dream; for in his de Monarchia and Convito he labored his plan with almost as much care as Moses worked out his for the Guidance of Israel when on the threshold of the Promised Land. He brought to it all the learning of the time, all the authority of the sages, and lent to it all the reasoning of his mighty intellect, all the power of his vast imagination. Augustine had planned and reasoned of a City of God—Dante would relegate Ecclesiastical authority to its proper province: the Spiritual in life and would create a country of God under Civil Rule. The greyhound should drive back the wolf and the flock should feed beside still waters.

Although he addressed himself to a Germanic Emperor, that he had in mind the Italian People as the Chosen People and Italy as the seat and centre of this perfect Imperial Government cannot be doubted. It was the Holy Roman Empire that was to bring Peace to a distracted Earth and although we, with wider experience and the light that those shed abroad who built

this Nation as the home of a Truer Liberty than Dante knew, have attained to a juster conception of Liberty, it should be remembered that Dante founded his whole plan on an assumption of universal Justice, and universal Peace.

The accepted principle then was that Kings could do no wrong. Dante was more advanced; yet even so, Dante's view was that though Kings could do wrong, Emperors—such Emperors as he had in mind, would do none. We may recall that the son of Marcus Aurelius was Commodus and the successor of the William II of 1900 was the William II of 1914, and that his Royal and Apostolic Majesty, the Emperor Francis Joseph, adored in Austria, was known in Italy as "L'imperatore degli impiccati."

It must be recalled that as amid the strife and clangor of a world given up to universal warfare, bloodshed, and brutality with no security for life or quietude save behind walls of guarded monastery or castle, and little there, he studied the history of the past, in all that long period the only government he found, which had given peace to mankind, was the Roman Empire under Augustus—and in that period Christ was born. God had chosen to come down on the earth. The age was metaphysical, and Dante, steeped in the metaphysical

teachings of the great Doctors of Divinity, conceived of all that took place under the Divine order as a symbolism, expressive of that order. Not Thomas Aquinas nor Bonaventura was more penetrated with theology or with mysticism. Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise were as real to him as Earth.

In his conversion, as it has been termed, he was turned wholly to things of the Spirit—not to religious offices—that was for the Priest; but to that which these offices and the ceremonies symbolized—the promotion of justice and equity. The flagrant violation of the basic principles of the Church revolted him, the formalism exasperated him. In his Bel San Giovanni he breaks the marble coping about a font, to rescue a child that had fallen in and was in danger of its life—an act of impiety. He saw no hope of restoring Religion to its purity save by bringing back the Church to its spiritual duty and establishing the Temporal Power in the hands of the successor of Augustus, Constantine, and Justinian. All looked back to the reign of Augustus as the golden. He withstood the prelates—even the supreme Pontiff and resisted Charles of Valois in favor of the just rights of the people.

Yet although the experience of six hundred

years more, with the final cataclysm into which Imperialism at its best and worst has brought the world, has overthrown beyond redemption Dante's carefully elaborated scheme, it has not yet affected the loftiness of his conception nor the wisdom of his aim. Indeed, the very completeness of the catastrophe in which vaulting ambition overleaping itself has involved the world has brought it apparently nearer to the consummation he had in mind, though the means are the reverse of those of which he dreamed.

If he conceived of a great State with a head wise, supreme, and satisfied, it was that Peace and Happiness; Truth and Justice; Religion and Piety might be established throughout the world for all generations.

If that conception was linked with an immeasurable power vested in one person which we now know to belong only to Deity, it must be remembered that the Roman Empire still existed; that it bore by common consent the name of Holy; that the whole world of Culture regarded it as the fixed order no less than devout Catholics to-day regard as such the Holy See; and that the question raised was not, as to whether there should be an Empire with a head

possessing imperial powers: but whether this or that man; this prince or that Bishop were the true successor of the Divine Augustus and should be the Head. There were numerous Republics in Italy. Florence was a republic, as were Genoa and Venice; but these republics were the prey of faction and strife and they were always at war with each other, and Life even at its best was in the midst of Death by violence and men were crying out, "How long, O Lord, how long?" All looked back to the reign of Augustus as the golden age when there was universal peace—and God willed to come to Earth to bring peace to men's souls. And all Italians looked on Rome as the Divinely Appointed to carry out the great scheme. God had appointed Augustus and Peter and Constantine—in however different ways, and the question was not whether the one or the other was divinely appointed; but which appointment outranked the other. And so Dante, without sacrificing aught of the Rights of the separate States, or of individuals, as he understood them, was for a great unquestioned, Central Authority, as supreme and pacific as Augustus; as devout as Constantine; as devoted to Law and Order as Justinian. If the Em-

peror were Henry of Luxemburg what mattered it? He was better than Charles of Valois and the Black Guelfs of Florence. He would reign as Roman Emperor and Florence would govern herself undisturbed in her dream of Beauty.[1]

[1] *Cf.* Bryce's *Holy Roman Empire*, chap. XXII.

Baron Sonnino once said to me that Italians cared more for the substance of Liberty than for the form of Government. In his own part of the country, Tuscany, there had been, he said, under the Grand Dukes an Autocratic form of Government, yet the People had always felt themselves to be free and had so acted.

IV

DANTE AND BOCCACCIO; PETRARCH; ENGLISH POETS

It is the foible of a considerable class of critics, who have got from the masters a faint conception—very faint, indeed, of the art of what is sometimes termed the Higher Criticism, to question everything that cannot be proved by some form of evidence which squares with their narrow interpretation of certain hard and fast rules which they have learned and often have mislearned. They ignore all evidence that does not meet—not the rules themselves, but their conception of those rules. They question all authority unless they can measure it with their very small measures and weigh it in their very small scales. They ignore all but the material. This, instead of being the higher, is in fact rather the lower criticism. It discards the whole body of tradition although its sources may have sprung in the very presence of him who struck the rock from which gushed the fountain. The great prin-

ciple of Credo is slain by Gnosco as Abel was by Cain and yet the whole progress of life is based on man's belief and when with his limited vision he begins to insist that he has arrived at complete knowledge he is already on the perilous road of sheer pragmatism beyond which lies the dark abyss of blind egotism.

Although no one has been subjected to more searching inspection than Boccaccio I feel that he is in many respects the highest authority on his great countryman. He was born in Dante's lifetime and in Cernaldo, a place near Florence whither his father moved very soon after his birth, and thus, he was brought up in an atmosphere where Dante's name must often have reached him during his impressionable years. He had a great—an unsurpassed literary gift, and felt the inspiring influence of the Poet of poets, and he became early an ardent disciple of the master and was among his enthusiastic admirers. When he had attained place and fame, himself, he devoted his matured powers to writing Dante's Life and commenting on Dante's great work. He bore more than a potent part in securing a foundation for the study in Florence of Dante's work. Indeed he brought this about by his eloquent and fer-

vent appeals. And he opened there the Dante lectures which have since continued from that time throughout Italy and of which a faint echo, very faint indeed, may now be heard in a secluded academic corner of the land which owed its discovery to the genius of another Italian, who, himself, might have lectured on a Dante Foundation. He had reached the seventeenth Canto of the Inferno—the seventeenth line of it, say the Italians—when he was stricken down by the illness which caused his death; but he had laid the world under tribute to his genius and he had brought to a new flame the torch which his master had lighted before the disciple was born.

Boccaccio's work contains in itself internal evidence enough to satisfy all but the mere journeyman critic, that he had devoted his powers to collecting all of what is now termed the data, in other words, all the information that he could that would throw light on his great subject. A part of what he relates—even a considerable part of it is claimed by the higher critics to be apocryphal. But who knows? He has been termed the Sentimental Biographer. But a Biographer without sentiment is a stick, a notch-stick, as it were.

Therefore, we may turn to Boccaccio as a very high authority on Dante.

"Several years after the composition of the Vita Nuova," says Boccaccio, "Dante, as he looked down from the high places of the government of the commonwealth of Florence wherein he was stationed, and observed over a wide prospect, such as is visible from such elevated places, what was the life of men, and what the errors of the common herd, and how few, and how greatly worthy of honor, were those who departed therefrom, and how greatly deserving of confusion those who sided with it, he, condemning the pursuits of such as these and commending his own far above theirs, conceived in his mind a lofty thought, whereby at one and the same time, that is, in one and the same work, he purposed, while giving proof of his own powers, to pursue with the heaviest penalties the wicked and vicious, and to honor with the highest rewards the virtuous and worthy, and to lay up eternal glory for himself. And inasmuch as he had preferred poetry to every other pursuit, he resolved to compose a poetical work; and after long meditation beforehand upon what he should write, in his thirty-fifth year he began to devote him-

self to carrying into effect that upon which he had been meditating, namely, to rebuke and to glorify the lives of men according to their different deserts. And inasmuch as he perceived that the lives of men were of three kinds—namely, the vicious life, the life abandoning vices and making for virtue, and the virtuous life—he divided his work in wonderful wise into three books comprised in one volume, beginning with the punishment of wickedness and ending with the reward of virtue; and he gave to it the title of Commedia."

I wonder if we are able to appreciate Dante's marvellous gift of handling his instrument, the Italian tongue? In a fanciful picture in which all the Rhymes come as maidens praying Dante to do them the honor to take them into his service, Benvenuto da Imola gives us to understand that Dante did not omit a single rhyme of which the Italian tongue is capable.

This boundless facility of use of the liquid Italian tongue is one of the things that gives Dante a charm to the Italian, which is, perhaps, lost to all but the delicate Italian ear so attuned to melody.

Many, if not most of the stories of Dante, that cast such light upon the poet, we owe to

Boccaccio and here is one which shows how near we came to suffer with Dante and lose the great fruit of his genius.

"It should be known that Dante had a sister, who was married to one of our citizens, called Leon Poggi, by whom she had several children. Among these was one called Andrea, who wonderfully resembled Dante in the outline of his features, and in his height and figure; and he also walked rather stooping, as Dante is said to have done. He was a weak man, but with naturally good feelings, and his language and conduct were regular and praiseworthy. And I having become intimate with him he often spoke to me of Dante's habits and ways; but among those things which I delight most in recollecting, is what he told me relating to that of which we are now speaking. He said then, that Dante belonged to the party of Messer Vieri de' Cerchi, and was one of its great leaders; and when Messer Vieri and many of his followers left Florence, Dante left that city also and went to Verona. And on account of this departure, through the solicitation of the opposite party, Messer Vieri and all who had left Florence, especially the principal persons, were considered as rebels, and had their per-

sons condemned, and their property confiscated. When the people heard this, they ran to the houses of those proscribed, and plundered all that was within them. It is true that Dante's wife, Madonna Gemma, fearing this, by the advice of some of his friends and relations, had withdrawn from his house some chests containing certain precious things, and Dante's writings along with them, and had put them in a place of safety. And not satisfied with having plundered the houses of the proscribed, the most powerful partisans of the opposite faction occupied their possessions,—some taking one and some another,—and thus Dante's house was occupied.

"But after five years or more had elapsed, and the city was more rationally governed, it is said, than it was when Dante was sentenced, persons began to question their rights, on different grounds, to what had been the property of the exiles, and they were heard. Therefore Madonna Gemma was advised to demand back Dante's property, on the ground that it was her dowry. She, to prepare this business, required certain writings and documents which were in one of the chests, which, in the violent plunder of effects, she had sent away, nor had

she ever since removed them from the place where she had deposited them. For this purpose, this Andrea said, she had sent for him, and, as Dante's nephew, had intrusted him with the keys of these chests, and had sent him with a lawyer to search for the required papers; while the lawyer searched for these, he, Andrea, among other of Dante's writings, found many sonnets, canzoni, and such similar pieces. But among them what pleased him the most was a sheet in which, in Dante's handwriting, the seven first cantos of the Commedia were written; and therefore he took it and carried it off with him, and read it over and over again; and although he understood but little of it, still it appeared to him a very fine thing; and therefore he determined, in order to know what it was, to carry it to an esteemed man of our city, who in those times was a much celebrated reciter of verses, whose name was Dino, the son of Messer Lambertuccio Frescobaldi.

"It pleased Dino marvellously; and having made copies of it for several of his friends, and knowing that the composition was merely begun, and not completed, he thought that it would be best to send it to Dante, and at the same time to beg him to follow up his design,

and to finish it. And having inquired, and ascertained that Dante was at this time in the Lunigiana, with a nobleman of the name of Malaspina, called the Marquis Moroello, who was a man of understanding, and who had a singular friendship for him, he thought of sending it, not to Dante himself, but to the Marquis, in order that he should show it to him; and so Dino did, begging him that, as far as it lay in his power, he would exert his good offices to induce Dante to continue and finish his work.

"The seven aforesaid cantos having reached the Marquis's hands, and having marvellously pleased him, he showed them to Dante; and having heard from him that they were his composition, he entreated him to continue the work. To this it is said that Dante answered: 'I really supposed that these, along with many of my other writings and effects, were lost when my house was plundered, and therefore I had given up all thoughts of them. But since it has pleased God that they should not be lost, and He has thus restored them to me, I shall endeavor, as far as I am able, to proceed with them according to my first design.' And recalling his old thoughts, and resuming his interrupted work, he speaks thus in the beginning

of the eighth canto: 'My wondrous history I here renew.'"

The question as to why Dante, a man of great learning, chose to write the Commedia in Italian, instead of in Latin, exercised the minds of many wise men of his day, Boccaccio tells us. His own opinion on the subject he gives as follows:

"In reply to this question," he says, "two chief reasons, amongst many others, come to my mind. The first of which is, to be of more general use to his fellow citizens and other Italians; for he knew that if he had written metrically in Latin as the other poets of past times had done, he would only have done service to men of letters, whereas, writing in the vernacular, he did a deed ne'er done before, and there was no bar in any incapacity of the men of letters to understand him; and by showing the beauty of our idiom and his own excelling art therein, he gave delight and understanding of himself to the unlearned who had hitherto been abandoned of every one. The second reason which moved him thereto was this. Seeing that liberal studies were utterly abandoned, and especially by princes and other great men, to whom poetic toils were wont to

be dedicated, wherefore the divine works of Virgil and the other illustrious poets had not only sunk into small esteem, but were well-nigh despised by the most; having himself begun, according as the loftiness of the matter demanded, after this guise—

'Ultima regna canam, fluido contermina mundo,
Spiritibus quæ lata patent, quæ præmia solvunt
Pro meritis cuicumque suis,' etc.——

he left it there; for he conceived it was a vain thing to put crusts of bread into the mouths of such as were still sucking milk; wherefore he began his work again in a style suited to modern senses, and followed it up in the vernacular." So far Boccaccio.

We have, however, on the interpretation of the Commedia a higher authority than even Boccaccio: Dante, himself. In his noted letter to Can Grande della Scala to whom he dedicated the Paradiso, Dante says:

"The subject of this work must be understood as taken according to the letter, and then as interpreted according to the anagogical meaning. The subject, then, of the whole work, taken according to the letter alone, is simply a consideration of the state of souls after

death; for from and around this the action of the whole work turns. But if the work is considered according to its anagogical meaning, the subject is man, liable to the reward or punishment of justice, according as through the freedom of the will he is deserving or undeserving. . . . The aim of the work is to remove those living in this life from a state of misery and to guide them to a state of happiness. . . ." He then proceeds to explain to his semi-royal friend how he came to choose the title: "The Comedy of Dante Alighieri a Florentine by birth, but not by character."[1] "And for the comprehension of this," he proceeds, "it must be understood that . . . comedy is a certain kind of poetical narrative which differs from all others. It differs from tragedy in its subject-matter,—in this way, that tragedy in its beginning is admirable and quiet, in its ending or catastrophe foul and horrible. . . . Comedy, on the other hand, begins with adverse circumstances, but its theme has a happy termination. . . . Likewise they differ in their style of language, for tragedy is lofty and sublime, comedy lowly and humble. . . . From this it is evident why the present work is called

[1] *Dante Alighieri*, by Paget Toynbee, p. 196 *n.*

a comedy. For if we consider the theme, in its beginning it is horrible and foul, because it is Hell; in its ending fortunate, desirable, and joyful, because it is Paradise; and if we consider the style of language, the style is lowly and humble, because it is the vulgar tongue, in which even housewives hold converse." [1]

Dean Church in his remarkable study of Dante, which brought him deserved recognition as one of the leading Dantists of his day, says, that "the Commedia first disclosed to Christian and modern Europe that it was to have a literature of its own." And he justly observes that we are now so accustomed to the excellent and varied Literature of modern times that we can scarcely imagine the time when Society was beholden to a foreign language for the expression of its highest thoughts and feelings. It was Dante who broke the spell that locked expression within this imperial prison. In his philosophical works he paid to it his homage, as the Language possessing nobleness, power, and beauty, because, he says, the structure of the Latin is a masterly arrangement of scientific art and the beauty of the vulgar depends on mere use.[2]

[1] *Id.*

[2] Il Convito, I, 5.

When he entered the lists, he was a champion indeed. He scorns the affectation, vainglory, and cowardice of those who condemned their mother-tongue: "that precious language" which if vile is so only "in the prostituted mouths of those adulterers." He was destined to give to it all the elements of nobleness, power, and beauty, and with it largely create a new Italy and a new Literature for Christendom.

There is no poet to whom we can liken him. Where there is a resemblance it springs from the natural cause of their reflection of himself. He preceded Shakespeare by three hundred years and Milton by something more than that. And he is Shakespeare and Milton and Bunyan rolled into one dramatic, poetic, earnest, philosophic, soaring soul. Doctor, philosopher, seer, poet, crusader, apostle in one human unit, he spans the whole range of human experience, imagination, and inspiration. He lays down the law of Divine Justice and Omniscience with the fervor and the steadfastness of a prophet of old. Does he denounce judgment, it is with the power of him who cries: "Thus saith the Lord." He has the confidence of one who has passed the terrors and stands in

his integrity, facing dazzled, but unamazed the presence of God.

But however great as scholar, philosopher, and apostle of freedom; ethics and religion, Dante may be, it is as poet, as "The Poet," that his fame is pre-eminent and as "The Poet" he must finally be judged. And as the poet we who have studied and loved him and become his followers are content that he should be judged. Taking the old Greek definition: who has been so great a creator as he? Who has sounded so profoundly the depths as he? But one—"Nature's child." Who has ranged so far? No one. Who has soared so high? No one. Who has had so vast an influence on the elevation of mankind? Homer? It is only of the Monarch of song that the question can be even asked. Shakespeare and Milton followed him—and neither had a wider gamut or sang in more dulcet or majestic measures. Neither covered so broad a field, or starred the body of his song with so countless a multitude of shining gems.

Dante sang of Italy and Shakespeare sang of England; and both sang for Humanity. And Italy has paid her tribute in the recognition of the supreme honor he conferred on her.

Hardly a river, valley, town, or hill throughout the upper peninsula but revels in the tradition that during his wanderings the Poet's presence consecrated it, or at least, his eyes rested on it and his soul drew inspiration from its beauty or its majesty. But all Italy claims him equally; for he was the first of the Italians who wrote in the Italian tongue and spoke to the Italian heart. Men of great family are proud to claim descent from those whom he dignified by inscribing their names on his pictured page, "though he sank them in Hell." The greatest National Society in Italy to-day bears his name: "The Dante Alighieri Society." The one nationally political Society in Italy, it is more National than political, and its National quality is deeper than anything merely political could be. It goes to the deepest fountains of Italian life and, inspired by the spirit which has its source in the great Apostle of Italian Liberty, it carries forward his work in the spirit represented in its name.

I think that of all the later Commentators, possibly, Giuseppe Mazzini had the truest appreciation of Dante. In a way possibly his life more than that of any other commentator resembles the poet's.

Like Dante, "haughty, disdainful, untamable," banished, proscribed, pursued by misunderstanding, malignity, and hate, he had, like Dante, deep rooted in his soul "the love of right and hatred of wrong," that sustained him through whatever tempests. Like Dante, possibly because of Dante, he bore ever in his heart the Titanic dream of an Italy at the head of a movement of Humanity.

Purified like Dante by the same fires, like Dante, "through this purification of heart," he passed from the hell of struggle to the heaven of Victory—at the last.

A poet must be the voice of his conditions, and these conditions take in his own soul and the soul of his surroundings—and as his vision is wide and clear, or limited, his horizon is broad or contracted and his penetration is profound; as his imagination is unbridled and free, he courses through wide regions or soars to empyrean heights; but ever his own soul and the soul of the world about it go hand in hand, whether through the lowest deeps or up the loftiest heights. Only the greatest, however, have the power to fuse the two and lift the other to a higher order. This power Dante possessed.

Job, David, Isaiah, Homer, Virgil, John, Dante, Shakespeare, all chant the passion of their own soul and the world-soul about them. And as they struck the chords to which the universal soul responded, so they have survived and will survive through the Ages.

Emerson, a great poet himself, though he had not the gift of music, has a notable essay on Shakespeare in which he sets forth his relation to his time and environment. He says incidentally that he was the Father of German Literature. He declares that Shakespeare's best biography is that revealed in his own work. And surely this may be said of Dante. Even though Boccaccio's hand has drawn his portrait with rare deftness, yet it is Dante himself who has given the world the true portrait of himself, set it in the frame of the Middle Age as it drew to its close. Like some of the work of the old Italian painters, portrait and frame are both precious; for both are from a master hand.

"Dante," says Mazzini, the great apostle of Italian Liberty and Italian Unity, "has done more for Italy, for the glory and the future of her people than ten generations of writers and statesmen.

"Those outsiders the most eager to defame us and call us impotent stop almost in terror before that name which neither the ages; nor the vileness of servitude; nor the tyranny of foreigners, of our princes and of the Jesuits have been able or shall be able ever to extirpate. The Land which has brought forth a soul so mighty is unique and contains in her womb a life which is immortal.

"All the great Italians who have written with power and have served to advance the idea of Nationality, have drawn a large part of their inspiration from Dante.

"Dante may be regarded as the Father of our language. He found it poor, uncertain, puerile; he left it full-grown; rich, free, poetic. He culled the choicest flowers of all the kinds and forms of speech from all the dialects and formed of them one common tongue that shall some day represent among us all, National Unity, and he has represented it through all the centuries of division before foreign nations.

"Oh, Italians," he said, "study Dante, not in commentaries, not in glossaries, but in the history of the age in which he lived, in his life. But take care. There is more than the verse in his poem and for this do not trust yourselves

to the grammarians and the interpreters. They are like those who dissect dead bodies—you see the bones, the muscles, the veins which compose the body; but where is the spark that animates it? Do you remember that Socrates declared the best interpreter of Homer to be the soul most inspired by the muses? Have you a soul of fire? Have you ever felt the sublime shiver that ancient memories cause? Have you ever embraced the tombs of the few great who spent for their country life and intellect? Have you ever shed a tear for the beautiful Land which hatreds, parties, divisions, and foreign hectoring have reduced to nothingness? If you are such, study Dante. From those pages of profound energy seek that magnanimous scorn with which the illustrious exile nourished his soul, because rage against vice and corruption is virtue. Learn from him how to serve one's native land, since to hope for it is not yet forbidden; how to live in misfortune. The nature of things has taken from us much; but none can take from us our hearts, neither envy nor the indifference of servitude has been able to destroy the names and the monuments, and to-day they stand like those monuments which face the pilgrim in the silent solitudes of

Egypt and say to him that there once were mighty cities. Let us wreathe their memory with filial affection. Every chaplet is a pledge of glory for us. Nor can you lay a sacrilegious hand on that crown which does not make a profound wound in the honor of the Land that gave you birth. Oh, Italians, never forget that the first step to make great men is to honor those who have already gone."

How wonderful are the works of God! David the Shepherd lad guarding his flock on the Judean hills, and learning how the Heavens declare the Glory of God and the Firmament showeth his handiwork, later driven forth by Saul and hunted like a partridge on the mountains; Homer driven by poverty to beg his bread and pay therefor with strains as wonderful as those to which "Ilion like a mist, rose into towers"; Shakespeare forced from Stratford to hold horses and call carriages at a Theatre door and incidentally to find and produce the treasure that was to enrich the Stage for all time. And Dante, love-stricken poet; serious-minded burgher and Guelf partisan, driven forth from Florence to find refuge in the houses of others, to live from crust to crust, to climb the stairs of others and eat in bitter-

ness the salty bread of others and, meantime, bearing ever in his heart the passion that has made the world his debtor, was toiling on to sound the depths of Hell and then to reascend to Heaven itself and picture in a new Apocalyptic vision the seat and setting of Divinity.

Many stories of Dante have been collected, some by his earlier biographers: Boccaccio, and others, and some by later investigators; all of which throw a certain light upon the poet's nature and manner of life, and all of which tend to present the poet as a man independent in thought and aloof in nature; conscious of his great power and, yet, with a certain unconsciousness of testifying it in his action which places him high above any charge of simple, ignoble egotism. One is of his stay at the Court of Can Grande—The Great Dog—where on an occasion his host observing his entire abstraction played on him a practical joke somewhat rude in its manner.

He—or some say, his courtiers—ordered a servant to gather the bones from the table and pile them beside the abstracted poet, and then suddenly called the attention of the rest of the company to what might appear the evidence of the poet's excessive appetite. "At least,"

said Dante, "it shows that I am not a Great Dog, or I should have eaten the bones."

It is not given to all poets to know that their song has gone home to the heart of those for whom they sang, and in this Dante was fortunate.

Of Shakespeare, dead at Stratford-on-Avon in comparative comfort, hardly a word was said for a hundred years; a sonnet by Ben Jonson, a few lines by a lesser poet; but his name and fame were almost lost, for a century they may be said to have been quite lost. Even now men are writing books to take away his name and give his fame to another: Shakespeare, of whom Emerson says that he was the Father of German Literature.

A stupid parson cut down the sycamore which tradition—one of the few traditions attached to Shakespeare, said he planted in his garden—cut it down because people, then beginning to recognize the Poet, came to see it and trampled his ground—his birthplace was left neglected till an American showman talked of purchasing it to bring it bodily to America as a part of his show.

In Italy within a hundred years chairs were established in Universities for lectures on the

Study of Dante. In Italy a tree reputed to have been planted by Tasso, though long dead and held up by iron supports, is still honored as Tasso's Oak—is known by name as a rendezvous where on occasion people assemble and orators make speeches. And of Dante—all Italy claims him as its own even though he

> "sleeps afar,
> Like Scipio, buried by the upbraiding shore."

Dante was the inspirer of the great body of poetry of the last six hundred years throughout the world. And, although we cannot say that without Dante there would not have been the current of poetry which has enriched the modern world, we may say that without him there might not have been Petrarch and Ariosto; Chaucer and Marlowe, and Shakespeare and Milton and Keats; Villon and Ronsard; Corneille and Hugo. And we can say with assurance that because of Dante their current was deeper and broader and has borne richer argosies for man.

From Boccaccio and Petrarch to Carducci through all the galaxy of stars great and small that have begemmed the firmament of Italian Literature, and thence have shed their benign

light upon the world there is not one since his day who has not drawn light from Dante's beams and given some reflection of his splendor.

Giovanni Boccaccio is said to have had the passion for letters aroused in his breast by a visit to Virgil's tomb at Posilipo. But, far more, he received his inspiration from Dante Alighieri. Indeed, his devotion to him whom he took as his Master was as much his pride as Dante's was in following Virgil. His letters to Petrarch; his eager insistence that his beloved friend and fellow artist should love Dante as he loved him speak more eloquently than any formal acknowledgment could do. Petrarch, the laurel-crowned, possibly influenced by the adulation of his admirers, affected not to know Dante's work, and had no copy of the Comedy in his Library. Boccaccio took him to task for this and sent him a copy, written out with his own hand and, thereupon, Petrarch, possibly to help his friend, who was involved in financial troubles, offered to buy Boccaccio's whole library and to take him in as well.

But whether or not Petrarch possessed a copy of Dante's work he was none the less indebted to Dante for his inspiration. By this time Dante's fame was an inheritance of all

Italy. The Inquisition had burnt some of his work, and the people were taking up his verses as a part of the vernacular. And Petrarch could never have been so intimate with Boccaccio his most ardent admirer without becoming saturated with the spirit of the Master.

So every Italian Poet has found his genius stirred to life by the voice of Dante sounding from his tomb through the ages with compelling inspiration. If this inspiration was fired by the sight of Virgil's tomb and Petrarch's laurel it was already prepared for the torch by the outpouring of Dante's anointing oil.

Books have been written to show the contribution that Dante has made to the literature of the World, by showing through quotation, parallelism, and allusion what the renowned poets of other nations have owed to the poet of poets. Even this volume of quotation and reference, however; of allusion and parallelism and reflection falls far short of showing the debt that mankind owes to the great leader and master of Idealism. The Sun not only gives light and heat to those who discourse of it, or who consciously utilize its rays, but tempers and vivifies the whole body of creation. The

power and the influence of Dante Alighieri have extended far beyond any express recognition of him—even beyond any conscious knowledge of his imaginative work: yet, we cannot follow the current of the literature of any nation without feeling that either consciously or unconsciously the reflection of his influence is found throughout its course.

Not only in Italy has Dante's influence been all pervasive. This might be expected. But in England, where we might not be so prepared to find it, we shall find his influence not less general. Chaucer, the Father of English Poetry, is full of his reflection, some of it directly from Dante's poems; some given at second-hand from Petrarch and Boccaccio. It was not until he had visited Italy that he struck the note that has brought him immortality and his inspiration was drawn from

"quella fonte che spande di parlar si largo fiume."

Dante's influence on the whole current of English poetry cannot be estimated save by those who know Dante. It speaks through Chaucer, whose impress on English Poetry may be likened to Dante's on him, and who shows his indebtedness to Dante throughout the entire

body of his work, many of his poems containing Dante's verses;[1] and it comes on down along the whole course. It is seen not only in distinct parallelisms of figure and form; but often in the very substance of the works themselves.

Spenser adopted and adapted to his purpose and time a great part of his moral from Dante, and imitates him in many passages of the Faerie Queene.[2]

Shakespeare, like Molière, took his own wherever he found it and had the kingly right of eminent domain; but many of those from whom he took his own had already taken it from the great Master of Italian poetry. Not only the names among his greatest dramas testify their Italian origin; such for example as Othello; The Merchant of Venice, Two Gentlemen of Verona; Romeo and Juliet, etc.; but in his poems the structure of the verse shows the Italian influence—and this is but another mode of saying Dante's influence, for Dante was the

[1] For example, in Troilus and Cressida; in The Parlement of Foules; The House of Fame; The Legend of Good-Women; Legend of Dido; Legend of Pernesytra; The Knight's Tale; The Man of Law's Tale; The Prioress's Tale; The Monk's Tale; The Wife of Bath's Tale; The Merchant's Tale; The Squire's Tale; The Second Nun's Tale; and The Balade of Gentlesse. *Cf. Britain's Tribute to Dante in Literature and Art,* by Paget Toynbee, Litt.D.; *Dante nel pensiere inglese:* A. Galemberti.

[2] *Cf. Dante in English Literature,* P. Toynbee, I, 81–82.

Father of Italian Literature. He invented the Terza Rima and he was the Master of the sonnet, before Petrarch or Sidney; or Shakespeare or Milton.[1]

Three centuries and more had made a certain difference in the mental attitude toward the great subject of Man's relation to his Creator, and even more in the expression of this relation; yet comparison of the two great Christian Epics must compel the admission that the great English poet who wrote to justify the ways of God to man, found both his theme and his manner in the majestic conception of the great Italian who preceded him by over three hundred years. He could not drop Lucifer so far that he would not find that Dante had sounded the depths; he could not soar so high that he would not find that Dante had already passed the shining height. Did he attempt to justify the ways of God to man? This is the central theme of the Divine Comedy.

In the matter of verse also Milton, organ-voice of England though he was, testifies his debt to his predecessor. Even the "mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies" found none

[1] *Cf. Dante in English Literature*, P. Toynbee, I, 81–82.

nobler than those which rolled from the melodious organ of the supreme Florentine.

Time and space forbid to trace the long line of resemblances and reflections of Dante in the great body of English poetry. It is not too much to say that his influence is wellnigh universal, and hardly too much to say that without him there might never have been so rich and broad a current of poetry in our tongue.[1]

As illustrations of this marked influence may be cited Milton's great picture of Satan in "Paradise Lost" with Dante's earlier picture in the XXXIVth Canto of the Inferno. Not Cimabue had a greater influence on Giotto, nor Giotto on his pupils, than Dante had on this puritan-scholar-poet of England. Each poured his own genius into his art and got therefrom his colors and his form; but Milton got his spirit from his forerunner and master.

Milton made no scruple of following Dante and declares himself an eager reader of Dante and Petrarch.[2] Milton was, says Toynbee, "an

[1] Without undertaking to give the parallelisms, I will refer the student to the notes in Cary's, in Norton's and in Longfellow's translations of the Divine Comedy, and to A. Galemberti's *Dante nel pensiere inglese.*

[2] Letter to Benedetto Buonmattai from Florence, September 10, 1638, cited *Dante in English Literature*, vol. I, p. 124; P. Toynbee.

accomplished Italian Scholar as is attested by his Italian poems (five sonnets and a canzone, written probably at Bologna in 1639) and he was widely read in Italian literature. Dante's works he had studied closely as is evident from the many references to the Divina Commedia as well as to the de Monarchia in his prose-works and Commonplace Book, while Dante's influence is perceptible not only in every book of Paradise Lost, but also in Lycidas and other of his lyrical poems."[1]

Milton's Commonplace Book, indeed, has numerous references to Dante.

St. Peter's apostrophe in Lycidas is certainly reminiscent of that in Dante's Paradiso, Canto XXVII, while the fine lines:

> "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed,
> But swoln with wind and the rank mist they drew
> Rot inwardly and foul contagion spread."

are taken directly from the Paradiso:

> "Le pecorelle che non sanno
> Tornan dal pasco pasciuti di vento."

The line regarding the spread of contagion is from Dante's VIIth Epistle.

[1] P. Toynbee, *Dante in English Literature*, vol. I, p. 120.

The list of parallelisms and indeed adaptations between Milton and him whom in view of his constant reflection we may call his Master is too extensive to be quoted, but it is hardly too much to say that many of the finest lines in the great English Epic are consciously reminiscent of lines in its great Italian predecessor.[1]

Shakespeare's "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" is from Virgil's admonition to Dante in Purgatory, Canto V, where he bids him,

> "Be as a tower that, firmly set,
> Shakes not its top for any blast that blows;
> He in whose bosom thought on thought shoot out
> Still of his aim is wide in that the one
> Sicklies and wastes to naught the other's strength."

Can one familiar with Dante read Milton's magnificent picture of Lucifer and not feel the influence of Dante's picture—not feel that he has but redrawn the latter's mighty figure, with his vast wings like sails? Nor is this any derogation from Milton's genius, as it is none from Shakespeare's that he seized upon and turned to his own use what Dante had left. Great poets may take their own, like Moliere, wherever

[1] For list of parallel passages in Paradise Lost and the Divine Comedy, *cf. Dante in English Literature*, vol. I, p. 127, and *ib.*, 587; P. Toynbee.

they find it as by a sort of right of eminent domain, and having taken the precious ore they fashion it in their own way for the delight and benefit of the world.

If it should be asked how, even if Milton knew Dante; Shakespeare could have known him or of him, the answer would be: How could he who knew "little Latin and less Greek" know all the rest that, without question, he did know? How did he come to know what he has set forth in Antony and Cleopatra, in Julius Cæsar, in Othello, in his historical plays, English and Roman, which have thrown a light on the dry annals of the times which they portray that has guided succeeding generations more than have the dim mile-posts of the annalists. The Mermaid Tavern and those other resorts better or worse in which the Warwickshire playwright passed his spare time with Kit Marlowe and Ben Jonson and the rest of their company were exchanges in which the wit and the poetry of that time passed current. On those tavern-tables rang for its testing-out all the metal that was offered in that great mart opened for the intellectual enrichment of that "spacious time." There the beakers were poured full of the juice of life, and whatever

was true metal Shakespeare seized upon, swept it through the mint of his genius, stamped it with his royal mark, and passed it on for the intellectual commerce of the world.

Whether it was through Petrarch, or Boccaccio, or other heliograph reflection, it is undoubtedly a fact that as Shakespeare chose the Montagues and Capulets from Dante's line as symbols of opposing houses that plagued the course of Love; so from Dante he got rays of the pure light of a genius as noble as his own and in its own way as dramatic in its form as that which has become the star of first magnitude in all the Literature of the Anglo-Saxon Race.

Though Shakespeare may appear to us, who speak only English, to have a broader spread of pinion—to lead his victorious thought with more triumphant sweep beyond the utmost bounds of Human speculation—though Milton may, to English ears, appear to sing with a nobler measure and in a more melodious strain, pray remember, that Dante preceded them by something like three hundred years and that as his leaders, beside the great Greeks and Latin Poets (whom they had likewise) he had only Guittone Guinizelli and the Provençal

Rimatori, while Shakespeare and Milton had Chaucer and Spenser and above all Dante himself. He walked alone so far as inspiring human fellowship was concerned. Those about him were all critical and many held that he was wasting his recognized genius writing in the vulgar tongue and of the dead and gone instead of in the scholarly and classic language, of the living. Shakespeare, on the other hand, had as shining a company of comrades of genius as ever poured about a man the electric stimulus of intellectual fellowship.

THE DIVINE COMEDY

The Poem begins:

"Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
Chè la diritta via era smarrita."

"Midway of Life's journey I again
Found myself in a dim forest;
For the right road was lost."

This the commentators have universally and doubtless rightly interpreted to mean that it was midway of the threescore years and ten of man's allotted span of life that Dante had his vision and began his great work. The selva oscura, whose memory to the Poet was, he avers, wellnigh as bitter as Death, they take to signify the jungle of worldly pleasure in which he had for a time lost himself. The lofty mountain whose shoulders, touched by the beams of the rising sun, which he tries to gain, is the Steep of Virtue. And the three savage beasts: the

nimble Leopard of the mottled skin, that faces him down and forces him back; the fierce Lion and the meagre, belly-pinchèd wolf that for all her ravine grew ever hungrier, they interpret generally to be symbolical of sensual Pleasure, Violence, and Avarice.

Just as he gives himself up for lost, the Poet descries a shape and addresses it for succor not knowing if it were a shade or man. Virgil declares himself; accepts his homage to him as his master and very author and later explains how Beatrice, whom he pictures with a touch:

Lucevan gli occhi suoi piu che la stella:—

—how Beatrice, sent by Lucia, who in turn had been sent by the Gentle Lady up in Heaven, had come from Rachel's side to despatch him to his aid.

The description of the evening hour that looses animals from their daily toil, Gray reflects in the opening of his Elegy, as he follows completely in his picture another and even more beautiful passage, from the poet's reference farther on in his journey to the Vesper-bell that sounds as though it mourned the expiring day.

The lost poet, inspired with new courage by

his master's rebuke of his cowardice and by his story of the pity for him of the three Blessed Ladies, though he had reminded his Leader that he was neither Æneas nor Paul, now rears his head like the little flowers chilled by the night, at the warming touch of the sun, and prepares to follow his guide through the alto passo.

Dante following his guide now moves down by "a wild and arduous way" to where he discovers in the gloom above a door an inscription which appalls him and which at his request his master explains to him though in only a general way. It runs:

"Per me si va nella città dolente;
Per me si va nell' eterno dolore;
Per me si va tra la perduta gente.
Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore,
Fecemi la divina potestate
La somma sapienza e il primo amore.
Dinanzi a me non fur cose create,
Se non eterne ed io eterno duro;
Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' entrate!"

"Through me leads into the dolorous city
Through me leads into eternal woe;
Through me one goes among the damned.
Justice moved my lofty creator,
Created me the Divine Power;

Supreme Wisdom and Primal Love.
Before me were no things created
Save the eternal and eternal I endure.
All hope abandon ye who enter."

This, explains Virgil briefly, is where fear must be left behind and cowardice must die; for here they have come to the place of which he has told him where he shall see those woful ones who have lost the good of Intellect. He then leads him in and "into the secret things." Here in the starless murk the tumult of lamentations and execrations; strange tongues and sounds of woe and rage with noise of hands as of sand driven by the whirlwind, wring tears from Dante and bind his head with horror. He asks who these may be and learns that, "these are the wretched souls of those who lived without infamy or praise and mingled with them are those caitiff angels who, though not rebels, yet were not true to God, but stood only for themselves. Hopeless of Death they envy every other lot. The world lets no fame of them survive; Pity and Justice despise them. Let us not talk of them; but look and pass on."

Next came a whirling standard followed by a rushing host, so innumerable that he never should have thought Death had undone so

many. And presently when he had recognized some, he recognized the shade of him:

"Che fece per viltate il gran rifiuto."

"Who made through cowardice the great refusal."

This great Refuser the Commentators have been busy with ever since. The early Commentators considered him to be Celestine V, "an old man whom Boniface VIII deluded into resigning after a five-months' reign and then imprisoned till his death." Some later Commentators hold him to have been Pontius Pilate; while yet others—among them Dante Gabriel Rossetti—hold him to have been that young man who had kept all the Law from his youth up, yet when told by Jesus that to inherit Eternal Life he must sell what he had and give to the poor and follow Him, turned away sorrowful and was heard of no more.

From this point they pass on to where in the dim light a crowd await on the sad shore of Acheron Charon, "the demon with eyes of glowing coal."

Such is the beginning of the most wonderful poem of modern times.

But although Dante has laid the world under

tribute to his genius, it is Italy especially that owes him and will owe him the greatest debt. The change in political relations during the Middle Ages was gradually bringing about a National Consciousness among the peoples of the several Countries which in the final arrangement appeared under the names by which they are known to-day. But Italy was so divided internally that it was long before she came to wear her own name as the symbol and proof of Unity. And that she finally did so was due considerably to Dante's influence through his own work and that of his followers.

If we have praised the Vita Nuova, magical and mystical in its spiritual suggestion with its love-poems set like jewels to mark the successive phases of Dante's consecrated devotion; and if we have attempted some comment on his curious and learned philosophical and political essays on the Government of the world temporal and spiritual in his time, what shall we say of the Commedia: the great climax of his genius; that amazing disquisition, allegory, poem, vision—what you will—which startled his Age; aroused the wonder of those that followed, and still after six hundred years amazes, thrills and charms the lover of Poetry

and excites the amazement of the speculative Man of Letters throughout the world? About all one can do is to apostrophize it and the Genius that conceived and executed it in its mighty scope and wonderful detail. Scholarship has lavished on it all the erudition of over five hundred years without wholly sounding its depths; Piety loses itself in its labyrinthine mazes of devotion; Philosophy wearies in unravelling the infinite wealth of its symbolism.

If we attempt its praise in any detail of analysis we are like one who undertakes to point out the beauty of some capital or other small item in some vast Cathedral, itself a miracle of architectural inspiration and genius in which is taking place some great ceremony of devotion with all the accompaniments of enthralling music and devout ceremonial, while all about are the enchantment of trees and flowers and over all the arching sky. Apparelled in beauty and packed with meaning, often too mystical to meet the spirit even of devotees, it continues and will continue shining through the ages, with its supernal beauty and its inner meaning as mysterious as the soul itself.

"The Divina Commedia," says Dean Church in his memorable essay on Dante, "is one of

the landmarks of history. More than a magnificent poem, more than the beginning of a language and the opening of a national literature, more than the inspirer of art, and the glory of a great people, it is one of those rare and solemn monuments of the mind's power, which measure and test what it can reach to, which rise up ineffaceably and forever as time goes on, marking out its advance by grander divisions than its centuries, and adopted as epochs by the consent of all who come after. It stands with the Iliad and Shakespeare Plays, with the writings of Aristotle and Plato, with the Novum Organum and the Principia, with Justinian's Code, with the Parthenon and St. Peter's. It is the first Christian poem; and it opens European Literature, as the Iliad did that of Greece and Rome. And like the Iliad, it has never become out of date; it accompanies in undiminished freshness the literature which it began."

It is the gift of the Poet that he knows his mission; he senses the rare air which his pinions cleave. This gift was Dante's in full measure.

As the old prophets delivered the oracles with, "Thus saith the Lord," so he speaks as the Prophet and Seer with the voice of authority and power. His enemies and those of Truth

are the same and he metes out Judgment to them with the authority of a final judge. It is not a personal revenge—not "a wild kind of justice" that he measures out—but actual justice according to a divine Law that he as the Judge knows, to which he bows and which he executes with profound conviction of its righteousness. This conviction of the righteousness of the Divine Order was not the least precious part of the great message that he delivered to the Italian People and through them to the Ages. And where he speaks as a poet none in Italy questions his authority. The successor of Boniface shreds out the political from the poetic and bows with the rest of Italy and of the Literary World to honor the greatest poet.

The Comedy, indeed, is the inexhaustible quarry from which since that time other poets in all lands have cut material—now for their deepest foundations and now for their highest embellishments.

We all recognize the great debt that we owe to Italy's Art—to her painting and sculpture and architecture of the time of her great masters when they were performing their miracles of Grace and Beauty. But how little do we

reflect on the vast debt that we owe to Italian thought, the greatest endowment of all!

The fame of Dante spread so rapidly that even in his *bello ovile* whence he was chased, the Florentines were fain ere long to bow their pride before the popular and final verdict. They voted a pension to Dante's daughter, as a tardy amend, and lectures on the great Florentine's work were started by his awakened fellow citizens—awakened too late to bring solace to his heart. It was while delivering lectures on him that Boccaccio was seized with the illness from which he never recovered.

Carducci tells us that according to some of the most authoritative Dantisti, the number of Dante codici, that is, copies of his comedy, exceed 700—or to be completely accurate the number of those known exceed 600. Yet, there is not known to survive a single trace of Dante's own hand in one.

Since the art of printing came into being more than 400 editions have been published and his work has been translated into thirty-five languages. The Italians claim for it a greater number of editions than for any other book except the Bible.

It was not called the "Divine Comedy," un-

til it was thus termed in the edition of Dolce di Venezia, issued in 1555. Landino, however, had in 1481, called the poet "the Divine."

Dante had no question as to the greatness of his poem. In the Paradiso he calls it "the consecrated poem" [1] and again "the sacred poem." [2]

In the first twelve lines of the XXVth Canto of the Paradiso he frankly gives his judgment on his work:

"Se mai contínga che il poema sacro,
al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,
si che m'ha fatto per più anni macro,

Vinca la crudeltà, che fuor mi serra
del bello ovile, dov'io dormi' agnello
nimico ai lupi, che gli danno guerra;

Con altra voce omai, con altro vello
ritornerò poeta, ed in sul fonte
del mio battesmo prenderò il cappello;

Però chè nella fede, che fa conte
l'anime a Dio, quiv' entra'io, e poi
Pietro per lei sì mi girè la fronte."

"If e'er the sacred poem, that hath made
Both Heaven and earth copartners in its toil,
And with lean abstinence, through many a year,

[1] Paradiso, Canto XXIII, 62. [2] Paradiso, XXV, 13–19.

Faded my brow, be destined to prevail
Over the cruelty, which bars me forth
Of the fair sheep-fold, where, a sleeping lamb,
The wolves set on and fain had worried me;
With other voice, and fleece of other grain,
I shall forthwith return; and, standing up
At my baptismal font, shall claim the wreath
Due to the poet's temples: for I there
First enter'd on the faith, which maketh souls
Acceptable to God: and, for its sake,
Peter had then circled my forehead thus."

—*Cary.*

Notwithstanding the great influence that Dante and his followers exerted on English Poets and English Literature, English scholarship was influenced by him yet more in an indirect than a direct manner. But few editions out of many scores published in Italy were brought into England and it was not until toward the middle or possibly the end of the Eighteenth Century, nearly five hundred years after Dante's death, that any one attempted a translation of his immortal work into English. A number of copies of editions of Dante's works—four or five—appear during successive generations in the Oxford Catalogues, which Institution might appear somewhat particularly interested in Dante as Serravalle in a commentary on him a hundred years after his

death, states incidentally, that he had studied at Oxford. On this point, however, there is little evidence.

About the middle of the Eighteenth Century, William Hudgin, a fellow of Magdalen, published in the *British Magazine* a translation of the paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer from the XXth Canto of the Purgatorio, and at his death in 1761, left a translation of the Divina Commedia with a fund to publish it. His executors, however, failed to carry out his instructions and forty years later the poem was published in translation by Henry Boyd of Dublin University.

That Dante should have been reflected by so many poets is not to be wondered at. The original thoughts of the Human Mind are much more limited than is usually supposed—Human Nature is the same everywhere; the passions of the Human heart are the same; Nature with its changing seasons is the same. Even its variant moods are controlled by the seasons; and however irregular are recurrent. And Dante has covered so vast a field of thought and with such masterly power that it would be difficult to sing of Nature or of Humanity without disclosing traces of his far-reaching influence.

Byron himself is always following in Dante's steps and, like Shelley, takes pride in proclaiming him the Master, and at times, even if but inferentially, his Master. He has this in common with Dante that he was a master of Verse and of Melody. He introduced the Terza Rima in English Verse, and his rendering of perhaps the most exquisite scene in the Divine Comedy and possibly in all poetry, though certainly far inferior to the original, has not been surpassed by any translator.

Byron writes, "Shelley always says that reading Dante is unfavorable to writing, from its superiority to all possible compositions. Whether he be the first poet or not, he is certainly the most untranslatable of all poets. You may give the meaning; but the charm, the simplicity, the classical simplicity is lost. You might as well clothe a statue as attempt to translate Dante. He is better, as an Italian said: 'nudo che vestito.'"

Shelley translated or adapted a number of Dante's poems and in *A Defense of Poetry* gives an appreciation of Dante. He says: "Dante's Vita Nuova is an inexhaustible fountain of purity, of sentiment and language; His apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise . . . is the

most glorious imagination of modern Poetry." He ranks the Purgatorio above the Inferno and the Paradiso above the Purgatorio. He excepts only the two famous Ugolino and Francesca scenes in the Inferno.[1]

Shelley in *The Triumph of Life* refers to the rhyme of:

> "Him who from the lowest depths of Hell
> Through every Paradise and through all Glory
> Love led serene, and who returned to tell
> The words of hate and awe; the wondrous story
> How all things are transfigured except Love."

Coming down to the nineteenth century we find Knowledge of Dante in England increasing. In that year Charles Dunster, in his annotations on Milton's Paradise Lost, points out the parallels between Dante and Milton.[2]

But the important happening in England touching Dante in the early part of the nineteenth century was the publication of H. F. Cary's translation of the Divine Comedy—beginning with the Inferno published in 1805, and ending with the publication of the complete

[1] See *On the Devil and Devils.*

[2] See H. J. Todds' Edition of Milton's Poetical Works, 1801, in which he gives a lengthy list of Parallels between Dante and Milton. A little later he did the same service by pointing out the parallels between Spenser and Dante. The Divina Commedia, translated by Henry Boyd, was printed in England in 1802.

translation, at the translator's own expense, in 1814. Still, it required a cordial review by Coleridge to bring the work into note.

The Literati were now finding the rich pasturage on which the Poets had so long been browsing. Wordsworth, who owed much to Dante, including the fundamental theory of presenting his pictures in simple speech as well as that equally fundamental plan of setting into his longer poems his exquisite illustrations from nature, declared that "the poetry of Dante and Michael Angelo proves that if there be little majesty and strength in Italian verse, the fault is in the authors and not in the tongue."[1] But not only Byron, Shelley and Wordsworth show the influence of Dante on their work. Coleridge, Leigh Hunt, Keats, Tennyson, Browning — not to mention the poets of lesser flight—all frankly own or show their vast debt to the Poet of Poets.

Keats took Cary's translation of the Divine Comedy as his only travelling companion in a visit to Scotland in 1818.

The essayists likewise have acknowledged, however inferentially, the vast influence of Dante on English Literature.

[1] Letter to G. Beaumont, October 17, 1805.

Coleridge in a lecture on the Troubadours in London, February 3, 1818, refers to the debt that the English poets owe Dante and in a lecture on Rabelais, February 24, he places him with Shakespeare and Cervantes among the creative minds of the world. Among his lectures he delivered one on Dante, February 27.

Coleridge says of the canzone:

"Tre donne intorno al cuor mi son venute,"

that he was beginning to understand it after an interval of fourteen years "during which no year passed in which I did not reperuse, I might say, construe, parse and spell it, twelve times at least—such a fascination had it, in spite of its obscurity. It affords a good instance, by the by, of that soul of universal significance in a true poet's composition in addition to the specific meaning."

Of all the translations of Dante the first one: that of Reverend Henry Francis Cary, appears still to possess a quality which none of its successors shows, as Chapman's Homer, made immortal by Keats, possesses it in even a greater degree.

Coleridge in writing to Cary says that, "in the severity and learned simplicity of the diction, and in the peculiar character of the Blank

Verse, it has transcended what I should have thought possible without the Terza Rima. In itself, the metre is, compared with any English poem of one-quarter the length, the most varied and harmonious to my ear of any since Milton, and yet the effect is so Dantesque that to those who should compare it only with other English poems it would, I doubt not, have the same effect as the Terza Rima has compared with other Italian metres."

In another letter he says: "What I express concerning your translation, I do not say lightly or without examination . . . I still affirm that, to my ear and to my judgment, both your metre and your rhythm have in far greater degree than I know an instance of, the variety of Milton without the mere Miltonisms, that . . . the verse has variety without any loss of contiguity, and that this is the excellence of the work considered as a translation of Dante—that it gives the reader a similar feeling of wandering and wandering, onward and onward. Of the diction, I can only say that it is Dantesque, even in that in which the Florentine must be preferred to our English giant—namely, that it is not only pure language, but pure English.

From now on the long-continued general in-

difference to Dante among the British disappeared and the best thought of England was given to the study of his work in full appreciation of its richness, if not yet of its influence on English Literature.

First among the writers of prose of acknowledged rank came Coleridge and then, with equal authority, after an interval, Macaulay, Carlyle and Ruskin took up the theme. Each treated it in his own way; each became an eager student and in certain respects a disciple of the Master; and of each it may be said that his name and fame gained lustre from his association with this august subject. It was Macaulay's essay on Milton that brought to the British Public the recognition that a new star had arisen on the literary horizon, and it was his admirable comparative study of Milton and Dante that gave to that remarkable essay of a young man the laurel crown.

Macaulay substantially opened his career with the study of Dante; he closed it when he was among the most widely read and celebrated writers in the world with an appreciation of his work second not even to that of Mazzini himself. He had loved and conned it as Dante said he had loved and conned Vir-

gil's. He awards the great Tuscan the palm over Milton and putting Shakespeare aside declares that he "runs neck and neck with Homer." He says, after allusion to the conciseness and minuteness of Dante's descriptions, "Where Milton would have left his images to float undefined in a gorgeous haze of language," and has given us his splendid lines, "I will frankly confess, that the vague sublimity of Milton affects me less than these reviling details of Dante. . . . We read Milton and we know that we are reading a great poet: When we read Dante the poet vanishes. We are listening to the man who has returned from the Valley of the dolorous Abyss!" This whole study of Dante is earnest, appreciative, acute. He places him where he belongs, at the top. Since Coleridge and Shelley and he have pointed to Dante standing beside Homer the "Sire" with his royal symbol of supreme rank, no English writer who took thought for his own reputation has ventured to omit him from that august company.

Some Italian authorities find it strange that this close and acute student of their great Master should have been indifferent to the power of his Allegory; and it would be curious for one

who had mentioned Bunyan in association with him to have assumed this view of what stands forth throughout the entire Comedy; but perhaps they have not quite comprehended the limitation of this statement as employed. Macaulay refers here solely to the use of allegory as applied to "the fabulous deities"; and is explaining the secret of Dante's success, where other great poets, both ancient and modern, have failed in introducing "the ancient fictions with effect." His criticism in the Essay on Dryden of the tendency of the Italian writers of the XIVth Century to relate every picture to the suggestion of perpetual allegory is but a protest against the overwhelming of the wonderful poem of "the mighty imagination that called a new world into existence and made all its sights and sounds familiar to the eye and ear of the mind."

Carlyle, who saw things in his own and, sometimes, peculiar way, takes Dante and Shakespeare among his heroes as mere poets beatified—"a peculiar Two" he terms them. "They dwell apart in a kind of royal solitude —none equal—none second to them; in the general feeling of the world, a certain transcendentalism, a glory as of complete perfection in-

vests these two." Dante is the true "singer"; the expression of the deepest thought clad in the loftiest and noblest music, that is "song." He is the spokesman of the Middle Ages, "the voice of ten silent centuries," and his poem is "a mystic unfathomable song."[1] He places naught so high as Dante's song; in it all the preceding Centuries have sung. He suggests indeed that Dante's Poem may be the most "enduring thing that our Europe has yet made," as Shakespeare is the greatest thing that we of the English race have made.

But especially is Dante the voice of Italy, "speaking forth melodiously what the heart of it means"; of Italy that lay even in Carlyle's day "dismembered, scattered asunder, not appearing in any protocol or treaty as a unity at all," yet the noble Italy was "actually one," for, as he says prophetically "The Nation that has a Dante is bound together" as even no vast "dumb Russia can be."

What is the secret of it all—of its power; its appeal; its august authority; its immortality? Is it its subject; its range; its grasp; its depth; its sublimity? Is it its sincerity; its intensity; its absolute and unwavering pronouncement of

[1] T. Carlyle: Citing Tieck: *Heroes and Hero Worship.* "The Hero as a Poet."

verity? Or does the secret lie in all these applied as by infallible judgment to the universal as to the individual Soul of Man; the eternal riddle of the Sphinx: man's existence and relation to His Maker, presented immortally and inexorably by one who by intellect, insight, genius and power, by experience and the conditions of his life was better fitted to give the answer than any other member of the race before or since?

As Dante wandered up and down throughout Italy, sometimes thridding winding paths down through valleys filled with a thousand mingled odors of flowers of every hue, sometimes climbing wearily over mountains; sometimes in sunlight, sometimes in fog through which the sun now appeared as though shining like a mole's eye through a white veil of skin, or now lost altogether, and again shining forth with all radiance as the fog blows off to open to the view the far sunlit vista, he got imperishable impressions of grandeur or beauty which he has made as imperishable for us as they were for himself. He has painted for us Italy. Can one think that these, his pictures, are all imaginary? Far from it. Go to Italy and take Dante as your guide. You shall find the very scenes.

He painted them "out-of-doors"—so to speak. He had seen them and knew them. Keep with him and you shall see the Dawn advance with white and vermeil-tinctured cheek and, like him, shall feel:

"As when to harbinger the morn, springs up
On freshened wing the air of May and breathes
Of fragrance, all impregned with herb and flowers:
E'en such a wind I felt upon my front
Blow gently."[1]

And with him you shall feel

"The hour that wakens fond desire
In men at sea, and melts their thoughtful heart
Who in the morn have bid sweet friends farewell,
And pilgrim newly on his road with love
Thrills, if he hears the vesper bell from afar,
That seems to mourn for the expiring day."

Ruskin appears to have discovered him after he wrote the first volume of *The Stones of Venice*, for Dante is not referred to in this volume, while the second volume is full of Dante.

To come down to our own time we find Browning, Tennyson, and others, like their predecessors, drawing from Dante their loftiest conceptions. For example: Tennyson not only

[1] Purgatory, XXIV, 138.—*Cary's Translation.*

takes from the lament of Francesca da Rimini his striking lines,

"That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things,"

but his poem Ulysses, one of his finest poems, is taken both in conception and general form directly from Dante.[1] Not that Tennyson or his predecessors had not the right to follow the Poet of Poets and take from their Master's crowded Armory that which they desired as they followed his banner. All high imagining has in it something of that which has gone before—something of the universal experience or aspiration. It is this royal pedigree which gives all poetry a kinship and to all the right to claim entry within the King's palace. The English-speaking world owes them a debt for bringing to them in forms that they could comprehend the older poet's wonderful visions.

In France and Germany there was more recognition of Dante than in England—yet not too much. In America the case stood almost as in England. But in Boston over a half-century ago there grew up a Dante cult which has brought deserved lustre to the scholars

[1] Inferno, XXVI.

who became the High Priests of the Cult, and has borne rich fruit.

Longfellow became the translator of Dante and being a charming poet, though hardly among the greatest, and very scholarly, his translation in blank verse is poetical, correct and scholarly, though not among the greatest, as may be well imagined, when we know that he translated thirty-one cantos in thirty-one consecutive days. The notes, indeed, to which he gave far more time and which are the mature fruit of his scholarship are a veritable contribution to the study of Dante. And his introductory sonnets are on an immeasurably higher plane than his translation. They mark his loftiest flight as a poet. Two of them, indeed, contain the immortal essence that bears them soaring into the realm of the highest inspiration.

Charles Eliot Norton, of the same group of devoted Dante-students and lovers, has given us a translation in prose, which, less aspiring and more patiently careful, follows more closely and with a greater ease the master's echoing steps.

I feel that it would be an unwarranted temerity to undertake to give within the limits of these lectures even an outline of the

essence of a work so unlimited in its greatness as the Comedy: a work to which the greatest of the great of his time devoted so large a part of his life and powers. All that one can do is to point to its majestic proportions and say, Behold, where like the everlasting hills it springs from the earth to Heaven.

Lowell has said of it that "he who becomes a student of Dante becomes a lover of Dante," and this interpretation of the spirit of the great drama is as true as though it possessed an enchantment which draws within itself whoever has the temerity to so much as draw near thereto.

The Commedia may be likened to a great Stream that, rising in the dark recesses of some savage mountain-forest, drives its way resistlessly through wild and awful regions, at times in a bed too deep almost to be traced, yet whose course is marked by the roar of cataracts and the rush of rapids; then, coming out under the stars, it enters upon a course through a region less terrible yet still wilderness and with extensive tracts of desert, abrupt and dread, interspersed with open vales and flowery meadows: pleasant spaces on which the sun shines and the

stars at times look smiling down; and then, with a swift turn, spreading out beneath the stars in a fair and shining land of sunlight and joy to glide onward with majestic current mirroring in its bosom the verdant shores and the whole light-filled arch of Heaven. No other poet has done this—perhaps no other poet could do it.

Well did Italy give to his work the appellation, "The Divine."

Studying with all his transcendent powers, informed with immeasurable genius, inspired by a divine conception of God, he assembles his colors—all the learning—all the knowledge of his time. Pedantry and prolixity creep in and trail along in his course, but he soars on. All the imagined wisdom of the future—all the passion of the age are on his palette and, with supreme genius he paints them on his mighty fresco spread to take in the past, the present, the future: the world, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise.

Nothing was too small and nothing too great for his august genius to picture and fix forever in imperishable form. Not Giotto nor Raphael painted such devotion; not Michael Angelo carved, whether singly or in groups, such life-like figures; not Petrarch nor Ariosto sang so

lofty and celestial a love. Who ever found and trod so boldly the path that spans the vast abyss and leads from earth to Hell and thence to Heaven? Who ever bridged with such audacity the gulf between the natural and the supernatural? Who ever soared so boldly not only into the sun; but into the light of Him who made the Sun and all the stars?

It has been objected by some of his commentators that Dante wrote only of the higher class, ignoring the lower classes who represented the great body of the poor. The charge is superficial and unsound. He sang of men of fame for a sound reason that he gives: that others would listen only when he sang of such. But if he sang of these, he sang for the lowly and they knew the song.

In the first place, it was the Feudal Age—the Age when the Gulf between Dives and Lazarus was fixed and very great, and while he indicts by name mainly those of renown; his mention of them is usually to point his moral with that infinite apprehension of the individual sins and vices that typifies the passion of mankind. And the whole tenor of his work is to hymn Divine Justice and "justify the ways of God to man."

The poor and humble had they not enough to bear without his cataloguing their shortcomings for the detestation and horror of the Ages? And could he have championed their cause more nobly than he has in his incomparable assault on those who oppressed and trod them down: the proud and truculent; the avaricious and unjust? Prelates and Nobles—even Popes he pillories with intrepid courage and sublime art. The Class that he is said to have ignored have, with a finer insight and a true intuition, a juster appreciation of him whom we celebrate than have those superficial critics. Where Dante is concerned there is no more question of class among Italians than where Italy is. Else he would never have been what he is to-day in Italy—he would never have become the oracle of the little *paesi* that, as I have stated, he is to-day.

The true secret of his extraordinary influence and power among the Italian people to-day in whatever part of the world they may be colonized is that they feel him to have been the great representative and spokesman of their race. That is why but now throughout the world they have been celebrating him reverently as the inspired Apostle of a new Evangel of the

gospel of Justice and of Righteousness addressed to Humanity, preached from a pulpit higher than that of prelates, with an authority greater than that of popes, in accents touched with divine beauty which find an echo in every Italian heart.

Should there be those who might esteem my statement to be extravagant and who might assert, as has been asserted, that the lower class —the peasant—has not the comprehension of Beauty nor the love of the beautiful that the cultivated and cultured have; let me say to them that such may be the general case among more occidental and duller peoples; but it is not true of the Italian—nor is it always true even among the duller or more commonplace Anglo-Saxon—as witness Ben Jonson and Burns and Keats, bricklayer and ploughman and horse-jobber's son. In Italy the love of the beautiful is not the heritage of the rich and cultured only, it is a trait of the Italian mind, as even the wayfarer cannot but recognize as he passes through Italy. It speaks in eloquent terms from scores of towns and hundreds of little *paesi* throughout Italy. In the poorest quarters he will find touching evidence of it in the flowers growing in often the meanest and com-

monest vessels, hung at poor little windows to speak of the hunger for something to satisfy some smothered æsthetic taste. In the most remote villages he will find the woman clad in colors so harmonious as to baffle any question of origin. It is taste—an æsthetic feeling—what you will; but it is innate. It has spoken for six hundred years from Giotto's tower. It has spoken a longer or a shorter time from many another campanile and picture and palace throughout Italy. Wealth and patronage are often needed to give scope to this innate taste, though by no means, always; but the taste and genius are endowments of those who mainly have not the other. There have been royal poets; but who can doubt that the anointing oil came from some divinely commissioned prophet?

All this Dante knew, and when he chose his village-song name and his language of the people for his vehicle he chose them because he knew that the safety of his *carroccio* depended on the devotion of Italy and of the Italian People. To them as his world he made his appeal, and he made it in terms "understanded of the People."

His work is full of pastoral allusions, such as those who used the vulgar tongue would appre-

ciate more than the proud nobles and wealthy burghers of Florence.[1] A few examples will illustrate:

In the XXIVth Canto of the Inferno is a winter scene which every *villanello*—every poor Italian farmer—might feel to be his personal experience—when his first look out in the morning shows him the ground white with frost and he re-enters the house to bemoan his fodderless lot and then within an hour finds the snow gone and seizing his staff, hastens to drive his lambs out to pasture.

The country scenes with which Dante softens his Purgatorio are as pastoral as David's.

In the Third Canto of the Purgatorio where his journey has brought him with his Master to the foot of the Mountain where they encounter the souls of those who died in contumacy against the Church, he describes how they came when he asks the easiest way up the steep ascent:

> "Come le pecorelle escon dal chiùso
> ad una, a due, a tre, e l'altre stanno,
> Timidette atterrando l'occhio e il muso;

[1] I well recall my friend, Professor Barrett Wendell's joy at receiving from a small farmer near Taormina whom he had congratulated on his gravid sow, a reply couched in a line of Dante's.

E ciò che fa la prima, e l'altre fanno
addossandosi a lei s'ella arresta,
semplici quete e lo'mperchè non sanno."

"As little sheep go out from the fold
by ones, by twos, by threes and the others stand
timid and holding eye and muzzle to the
ground, and what the first doth that the
others do, huddling up to her should she stop,
simple and quiet, and what the reason is
know not."

—*Purg.*, *Canto III*, 79–84.

When at the beginning of Canto XVII of the Inferno he describes the Monster Geryon, he describes him as an old skiff that lies at times half in the water and half out, and presently when he finds the Usurers who have done violence to Nature and now sit with eye fixed forever on their purses he tells of one who is a Paduan,

"Qui distorse la bocca e di fuor trasse
la lingua, come bue che il naso lecchi,"

"Who writhed the mouth and lolled his tongue out like
an ox that licks his nostrils."

Surely these apt and homely similes are for the country folk.

In the XXVIIth Canto of the Purgatorio, he paints a scene with the goats, wild and

wanton enough on the hills when unfed, now well fed and quiet in the heat of the day lying down in the shade chewing the cud while the shepherd leaning on his staff minds the flock:

"Quali si fanno ruminando manse
le capre state rapide e proterve
sopra le cime, avanti che sien pranse
Tacite all'ombra, mentre che il sol ferve,
guardate dal pastor, che in su la verga
poggiato s'è, e lor poggiato serve."

"Like goats that having over crags pursued
Their wanton sports now quiet pass the time
In ruminating—sated with their food,
Beneath the shade, while glows the sun on high
Watched by the shepherd with unceasing care!
As on his staff he leans, with watchful eye."
—*Wright.*

When descending to the abode of Minos, the dread judge, in the second circle of Perdition, he sees the carnal sinners swept along by "La bufera infernale," the infernal hurricane, he, after a picture of the bellowing sea, likens them to the starlings swept along in great ranks by the winter wind, and then to cranes passing in a long line sounding their cry. He often sings of birds—usually to express happiness and joy; but here he is picturing the reverse of these—infinite woe—the tempest and the bel-

lowing sea and he employs the storm-driven starlings and the cranes to give at once the sense of motion and violence to the sweep of the storm and vividness to the lament of the lost souls swept on by its power. No other such picture of a storm has ever been given. Beginning with a tempest at sea it is lifted by a touch to the storm of the wrath of God. And at the end human pity sinks overwhelmed into merciful oblivion. No translation has ever approached the faintest reproduction of the sublimity of this Canto.

"E come gli stornei ne portan l'ali,
nel freddo tempo, a schiera larga e piena;
così quel fiato gli spiriti mali;

Di quà, di là, di giù, di su gli mena,
nulla speranza gli conforta mai
non che di posa, ma di minor pena.

E come i gru van cantando lor lai,
facendo in aer di sè lunga riga,
così vid'io venir traendo guai,
ombre portate della detta briga."

—*L'Inferno, V*, 40 *et seq.*

And a little later, in the immortal scene where at his call, "Light upon the air," come together the spirits of Francesca da Rimini and Paolo da Verrucchio, he resembles them to doves

that at the call of love come floating down on quiet wings to meet their mates, at their sweet nests.

His famous picture of Francesca da Rimini and her Lover is softened hardly more by her tender lament, than by this beautiful simile of doves. Observant of Nature in every mood and feeling, its poetry in every strain, he was especially given to drawing his similes from birds—uccelli is the musical Italian name, or sometimes augelli—especially from doves, which are perhaps of all created life those that have closest affinity to the impalpable ethereal element, denoting love, gentleness, and peace.

> "Quale colombe dal desio chiamate
> Con l'ali alzate e ferme al dolce nido
> Vengon per l'aer dal voler portate." [1]

In the Purgatorio the hurried flight, at Cato's call, of the souls who had been listening with him and Virgil in deep content, to Casella's singing of his song, he likens to the flight of doves suddenly frightened while quietly picking up the grain of their repast.[2]

Thus also when he sees the holy champions of the Faith pass in seraphic chorus before the

[1] *L'Inferno*, V, 82–5.
[2] *Purgatorio*, Canto II.

arms of the Cross, he likens them to flocks of birds above the shore risen content from their feeding-ground and wheeling, now in circles and now in other ranks:

"E come augelli surti di riviera
quasi congratulando a lore pasture
fanno di se or tonda or altra schiera.

Si dentro ai lumi sante creature
volitando cantavano"
—*Paradiso, Canto XVIII*, 73, 75.

Again in the next Canto he uses the stork to illustrate the love that guards and the love that is dependent:

"Quale sovr' esso il nido si rigira
poi che ha pasciuto la cigogna i figli,
e come quei ch'è pasto la rimira;"

"As o'er her nest the stork goes circling round
When she with food has satisfied her young
And as the brood, well-fed, look still to her."

He opens Canto XXIII of the Paradiso with a picture of birds and of Beatrice:

"Come l'augello, intra l'amate fronde,
posato al nido de suoi dolci nati
la notte che le cose ci nasconde,

Che, per veder gli aspetti desiati,
e per trovar lo cibo ondegli pasca,
in che i gravi labor gli sono aggrati,

Previene il tempo in su l'aperta frasca
e con ardente affetto il sole aspetta,
fiso guardando, pur che l'alba nasca;

Così la donna mia si stave eretta
ed attenta, rivolta in ver la plaga,
sotto la quale il sol mostra men fretta."

"Even as the bird amid the leaves beloved
Reposes on the nest of her sweet brood,
By night which hideth all things from our sight,

Then, so she may behold their well-loved forms
And find the food with which to nourish them,
In which her heavy labors are a joy,

Prevents the morn upon an outer spray,
And with an ardent love awaits the sun,
Fixedly watching for the birth of dawn,

So stood my Lady, erect and all intent
Turned toward the region 'neath the which the sun
Doth show less haste."

Another illustration of birds comes when in the Seventh Heaven describing the holy joy of contemplation, he pictures Jacob's ladder:

"Vidi anco per li gradi scender giuso
tanti splendor, ch'io pensai ch'ogni lume
che par nel ciel, quindi fosse diffuso.

E come, per lor natural costume,
le pole insieme, al cominciar del giorno,
si muovono a scaldar le fredde piume;

Poi altre vanno via senza ritorno;
altre rivolgon sè onde son mosse,
ed altre roteando fan soggiorno,

Tal modo parve a me che quivi fosse
in quello sfavillar che insieme venne
sì come in certo grado si percosse."

—*Paradiso, Canto XXI*, 31–43.

"I saw, moreover, coming down its steps
so many glowing splendors, that I thought
that every star seen shining in the sky
had been poured out of it. And even as rooks
as is their natural wont, when day begins,
together move to warm their chilly plumes;
and then, without returning, some fly off,
and some go back to whence they started first,
while others, whirling in a circle, stay;
such was, it seemed to me the fashion here
within the sparkling throng which came together."

In the Paradiso he uses doves for his simile in the Eighth Heaven.[1]

In the preceding Canto he has seen St. Peter and has been questioned by him as to his Faith and the reasons therefor and has given his creed: Belief in The Trinity: One God:

"Solo ed Eterno che tutto il ciel move
Non moto, con amore e con desio,"

and three persons, Eternal and of one essence.

Now comes St. James, who typifies Hope,

[1] *Paradiso*, Canto XXV, 19–24.

and Dante describes his Hope that "the Sacred Poem to which both Heaven and Earth have so set hand that it had made him lean for many years," might overcome the fierceness of the hostile wolves, who had driven him from his charming fold. . . . "That sheep-fold of St. John,"—of which he had asked his ancestor, Cacciaguida (Canto XVI),—where he had slept like a lamb and to which he hoped still to return and as a Poet take at his own baptismal font the laurel crown.

He thus pictures the coming of the Spirit of Hope, "the Baron," as he terms St. James:

"Si come quando il colombo si pone
presso al compagno, e l'uno all' altro pande,
girando e mormorando, l'affezione;

Così vid'io l'un dall' altro grande
Principe glorioso essere accolto,
laudando il cibo che lassù li prande."

"As, when a dove alighteth near its mate,
each, by its circling and its cooing, shows
the other its affection; thus I saw
one great and glorious Prince the other greet
and praise the food
which sateth them up there."

—*C. Langdon.*

VI

DANTE AND HIS TEACHING

Dante was not the first to conceive of a journey to the Infernal regions. Homer and Virgil had both pictured in immortal verse such an experience and other poets had done the same. He was not even the first to give the experience of a human being making the complete journey. Fra Alberico and others had essayed it. But he was the first to make such a journey the central thread on which to hang in epic form the whole drama of Human Life together with the conditions that brought it into being, surround it in its mortal stage, and absorb it at the end, chastened and redeemed in the infinite.

It has been often charged that he is grotesque and his verse at times harsh. Both charges are measurably true. The time was grotesque to us; whether it was so to itself is a different question. Burning men for their opinions is grotesque. Dante had seen it done. He tells us so. Bowing them beneath immeasurable

weights that bend them to the ground is grotesque however poets have pictured them thus burdened down, and architects have perpetuated the idea in stone. Do we not to-day in straining and distorted caryatides follow the grotesque?

Dante was master of his song—and knew how to adapt it to his aim.

All the preaching of the time was of a material or physical Inferno and Purgatory. None doubted the existence, or even within limits the location of such places of punishment. Many Ages have passed since then without substantial change of this fundamental idea, and up to a generation or two ago, it may be said to have been generally accepted, and even now it is distinctly taught by a great portion of the body of the Church.

The Crusades were to purge men of their sins, not indeed, of the spirit of sin, but of the consequences of sin in the form of violence and to save them from perpetual physical punishment which they feared.

To criticize Dante for having accepted the belief of the time is to criticize him for not having revolutionized the belief of the whole world and the preaching of the entire Church.

He addresses a world in which his figures were as plausible and as real as the scenes enacted before the eye. He made them so real that they have lasted in the conception of the minds of men almost down to the present time. Grotesque, painful, brutal some of the scenes may appear; but withal his work in scope, in sweep, and in manner is august. And with such a scope and manner the grotesque but sets off and emphasizes the harmonious beauty of the majestic whole, a poem of which it may be said that it might appear the answer to that prayer:

> "O issplendor di Dio, per cu'io vidi
> l'alto trionfo del regno verace
> dammi virtù a dir com'io lo vidi."

> "O splendor of God through which I saw
> the exalted triumph of the Realm of Truth
> Give me but power to tell how I beheld it."

But we must remember that there is what Ruskin terms the Noble Grotesque. In his chapter on the Renaissance Grotesque in the third volume of *The Stones of Venice* he goes into a long and acute discussion of the nature of the difference between the Noble Grotesque and the debased Renaissance Grotesque.

He is writing of the Architecture of Venice; but in dealing with the subject which he terms "Noble Architecture," he cites Dante, of whom, he says, that "he believes that all such men as Dante are sent into the world when they can do their work best." And he adds, "therefore though there are passages in the Inferno which it would be impossible for any poet now to write, I look upon it as all the more perfect for them." "The whole of the Inferno," he goes on, "is full of this Grotesque, as well as 'The Faerie Queen.'"

Finally, after an analysis of the two forms of the Grotesque and of the difference between them, he says: "I think that the central man of all the world as representing in perfect balance, the imaginative, moral and intellectual faculties, all at their height, is Dante. And in him the Grotesque reaches at once the most distinct and the most noble development to which it was ever brought in the human mind."

He then cites to sustain his view of the Noble Grotesque, the theory of which he so fully develops, Shakespeare's Grotesqueness and that of Æschylus and of Sophocles.

In fact, I think we may conclude with Ruskin, that while something must be attributed

to the time, Dante deliberately built into his fabric the grotesque with a full sense of its effect in heightening the relief of its lofty and august beauty.

If he was at times apparently even harsh, it was, we may feel sure, his deliberate election to express in the very sound of his verse the idea that he proposed to convey unsmoothed and virile.

The author of the Ottimo Commento says: "I, the writer, heard Dante say that never a rhyme had brought him to say other than he would; but that many a time and oft he had made words say for him what they would not say for other."

It was a proud boast which Posterity has justified.

Yet, however harsh he was, and apparently wilfully so when it suited his idea, who could be so melodious as he when he wished and who so simply and tenderly beautiful! Not Petrarch, nor Ariosto, nor the greatest of their followers; for however great they were, they were all followers of him. However boldly they ventured forth, their prow ever followed in the shining wake of what Dante terms his navicello. There was a time when under some

curious literary malaise even the literary quidnuncs, carried away by the spreading sails of those voyageurs, forgot the leader and inspirer and under some delusion thought the followers led the leader.

But who—at least, any other than Petrarch himself—imagines that Petrarch would have sung his charming love-strains to Laura and would have swept the lyre with so entrancing an art had it not been for his Master, Dante? Who believes that Ariosto, Tasso or Alfieri would have soared to such lofty heights but for the imperial leader who had shown the way? They all—even Petrarch however he might assert rivalry—laid their chaplets at their Master's feet, they and their followers alike, and the dry and formal and non-understanding critics who judged by contemporary and temporary popular applause have proved as futile in their attempt to subordinate the great Master of Italian song as they have been non-understanding of that for which he has stood in Italy through the Ages. There is no artist, no poet whom Italy would deem worthy to endow with the name who has not tried to pay his tribute of honor and gratitude to the Poet of Poets. From the reply of Guido Cavalcanti

and Cino da Pistoia to Dante's first sonnet on down to the latest Italian Poet, every one who aspired to national recognition has paid his meed of honor to the Master.

When Cecco Angiolieri commends himself to Dante he speaks for the long retinue that has followed:

> "Dante Alighier da Cecco 'l tuo serv e amico
> si raccomanda a te com'a signore."

Boccaccio, Antonio Pucci, Michael Angelo, John Battista Mirini, Agosto Paradisi, Alfieri, John Battista Niccolini, Silvio Pellico, Leopardi, Agostino Cagnoli, Guiseppe Giusti, Marchetti, Mameli, Carducci, Giacomo Zanella, Giuseppe Manno all have written Poems to Dante as their Master and Guide.

Among the benefits which Dante conferred on Italy and, indeed, on the world in his masterpiece was first, his dedication of his great powers to the teaching of the moral purpose of Man's existence; and secondly, their application in the forms of beauty and majesty in which he clothed his great ideas; and thirdly, the medium and the manner in which he presented them. Among these, intertwined with rare art are all the other beauties and benefits of

his work, which amaze and enthrall the scholar and the student.

Hitherto, poetry had been the language of the Drawing-Room and the Bower. Dante lifted it and made it that of the Sanctuary and the Open Sky. With bowed heart and uplifted eyes he, as Italy's greatest teacher, sounded all the depths of human experience and soared to heights of ineffable light, hymning the Might and Majesty of God and expounding the Wisdom, Justice, and Love of the Divine. If his thought is often so profound as to baffle scholars, his illustrations are addressed to the simplest heart and are clad in the mild manner *in qua et mulierculæ communicant.* And it must be remembered that Wisdom is sometimes hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes.

But Dante did far more for Italy than merely write for them a great poem or poems. In this he did for Italy only what he did for the whole world had the world but the wit to know it as the Italians know it. His especial endowment for Italy was something beyond this. What he did for the Italians was to give them a National Consciousness and furnish them the means to attain it completely. As

Virgil aroused him and guided him, so he aroused the Italian soul and pointed it to the heights where the sun shines, and then led it forward.

In a time when superstition was usurping the high seat of pure religion and when scholarship bereft of faith was tending more and more to point to pagan virtues as the aim of culture rather than to Christian Faith, Dante arrayed on the side of Religion, a scholarship second to none in Italy and with a genius, unapproachable by any, sounded the call back to the worship of God and of His Divine Son. Against all the teaching of the Sceptics and Agnostics he placed the authority of Divine revelation; the authority of the sainted Fathers and, in a world which was the epitome of his time, held up for the amazement and conversion to the Truth of the Italian people a drama which first compelled attention and then brought them trembling and amazed to a new realization of the infinite Power and Dominion of the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. He taught in a form that went home to every heart and mind how even Popes and Emperors are subject to His dominion and must stand at last at the Judgment bar of Divine Justice to receive sen-

tence according to their deeds. If he sang mainly of the great and powerful, as has been charged, the voice was one that represented the people—the oppressed and mute, and they recognized it as such. They might not understand the esoteric analysis of motive and action or the sublime flights of his imperial imagination; but when a great Noble or Prince of a powerful House was put by name to the torture in Hell, they could understand the courage and the motive that chained him there. The wealth of classical allusion might be lost on them; but the simple morality was understood and his illustrations taken from the ordinary scenes of life as common to the peasant as the prince went home to them.

Among his traits shines his desire for Fame. Petrarch declares that he sacrificed his wife and family seeking glory. We need not accept this harsh estimate; for Petrarch certainly was envious of Dante's reputation, and one of Dante's daughters, and two of his sons, were with him in Ravenna. Dante was free from envy. His deadly sin, he tells us himself, was Pride. But undoubtedly he was avid of fame and did not spare himself in its pursuit.

When in the seventh gulf of Hell he sinks

down breathless and exhausted after his climb out of the sixth gulf, his Master spurs him on with the mention of fame:

"Omai convien che tu così ti spoltre
Disse 'l maestro; chè seggendo in piuma,
In fama non si vien, ne sotto coltre,

Senza la qual chi sua vita consuma,
cotal vestigio in terra di se lascia,
qual fummo in aere ed in acqua la schiuma."[1]

"'Now needs thy best of man.' So spake my guide,
For not on downy plumes nor under shade
Of canopy reposing fame is won,

Without which whosoe'er consumes his days
Leaveth such vestige of himself on earth
As smoke in air, or foam upon the wave."

But more than in search of fame his Odyssey was inspired by his heart-hunger for Peace. This he discloses throughout all his records whether in prose or verse. This we find in his great Comedy even amid the actual strife portrayed in its most terrible scenes. As it speaks even through the cries and laments of those who have lost it, so it speaks in the traces of the age-long conflict stamped on his face turned toward the Heavens in unspeakable adoration

[1] *Inferno*, XXIV, 45–50, Cary.

as in the portrait which represents him in his age, laurel-crowned with all that fame gives, and yet turned with unspeakable longing for that Peace which passeth man's understanding. We find it disclosed when on the way to the Seventh Cornice he hears the voice of the shining Angel who calls:

> "This way he goes
> Who goes in search of Peace."

There is a story told of Dante contained in what is known as The letter of Frate Ilario: how one day at his monastery of Santa Croce above the blue bay of Spezia the narrator with some of his brother-monks saw a lone man approaching—a stranger to all—and they questioned him of his wishings and seekings there. And he moved not, but stood silently contemplating the columns and arches of the cloister. And they asked him again: "What he wished and whom he sought?" Then, "slowly turning his head and looking at the friars and at me, he answered: 'Peace.'" And presently they knew him, for his fame had already spread throughout all that part of Italy; so that, as the story goes, the women in Verona whispered as he passed: "There goes the man who has been in

Hell." And, says the narrator, "When he saw that I hung upon his countenance and listened to him with strange affection, he drew from his bosom a book, did gently open it and offered it to me, saying: 'Sir Friar, here is a portion of my work which peradventure thou hast not seen. This remembrance I leave with thee. Forget me not.'"

I have felt that possibly Shakespeare had in mind this story of the wanderer coming to the monastery gate, when he brought Wolsey to such a door to say:

> "An old man, broken with the cares of State,
> Has come to lay his weary bones among you.
> Give him a little earth for charity."

The teaching of Dante's great work was, as he himself declares, Righteousness. The argument is, as he writes Can Grande della Scala, the State of Souls after Death. The aim is "to remove the living from the state of misery by directing them to the state of felicity." But if he was writing a great appeal to the Human Soul to seek after God; he was also writing a great poem. And to this he gave no less of his inspired genius than to the other. It is after all, not the Matter; but the Form in which the

poet has pictured this that has caught and held the heart of the world. He has shown that he knew as well as any devotee that "Beauty is its own excuse for being."

The Inferno has taken strongest hold on the popular imagination throughout the generations, because of its terrible pictures; its *eterno dolore;* its inexorable, hopeless infinity of woe. But this is only the first stage of the wonderful journey—a dreadful and soul-wringing experience, it is true, for few can go the full length with the Poet, who held that the knowledge of the justice of the punishment would make pity a sin. If, however, one but keep with him and his guide he shall with them come out from that dreadful gloom and see again the stars. He shall bathe in the "dolce color d'oriental zaffiro" and he shall see that conquest of the Dawn and recognize from afar the shimmering of the Sea.[1] He shall meet the Heavenly Pilot and hear the Hundred-throated chorus in the shining bark of God's angel chant: *In exitu Israel de Ægypto.* He shall hear Casella begin to sing, as Milton heard, when Dante "woo'd him to music," one of Dante's canzoni:

"Amor che nella mente mi ragiona."

[1] *Purgatorio,* Canto I, 115.

Sordello shall guide him even if by a winding path to where, amid countless flowers that give the air the odor of a thousand fragrances, embosomed in a dell a gentle army of the Great shall sing, "Salve Regina." Twilight shall have for him new meaning when he shall have heard the hymn:

"Ere Daylight fadeth"

and angels from Mary's bosom in trailing robes as green as little green leaves may float within his view. And on and on he may go rising ever to higher flights; companying with the souls who are journeying toward the gates of Paradise through pictures as wonderful as ever came from human imagination and catch strains of music as divine as ever sounded in mortal ears.

"Every line of the Paradiso," says Ruskin, "is full of the most exquisite and spiritual expressions of Christian truth; and that poem is only less read than the 'Inferno'; because it requires far greater attention and, perhaps, for its full enjoyment a holier heart." [1]

The Paradiso, indeed, is the highest conception that the poet's imagination has ever at-

[1] *Stones of Venice*, II, 324.

tained. Its central idea is Light—The Light of the Splendor of God. Light within light fills it. The Light of Love that moves the sun and all the stars.

It begins with:

> "The Glory of Him who moveth all
> penetrates all the Universe, and shines
> more brightly in one part, and elsewhere less."

It proceeds ever from Light to Light—from radiance to radiance—from effulgence to effulgence—and throughout the whole course it is "as though all the stars of Heaven were being poured out of it."

Dante's great effort for the restoration of the Empire under ideal conditions as he imagined them was, however, but a part—a moiety of his work for the regeneration of the world. The other moiety was the regeneration of the Church. He would render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's and to God the things that were God's. And if he devoted to the former his curiously reasoned De Monarchia and, now and again, a part of a Canto, he devoted his greatest work to the preaching of the Word, and to the regeneration of the Church as its elect on earth.

In Religion he was the most orthodox of Churchmen; but when it came to the temporalities he was the sternest of Puritans. He denounced the enemies of Boniface VIII for crucifying the Lord afresh in the imprisonment and insults to the Pope; yet when Boniface attempted to get possession of the Capital of Tuscany he withstood him as his bitterest foe. He declared that his royal ally and agent had entered Florence with "the spear of Judas," and later he drew against Boniface's ambition and avarice the bitterest indictment ever drawn against a temporal ruler.

He left in Italy his high authority for the supreme power of the Pope in matters spiritual —he left him sole master of Peter's Keys; but also he left an equal authority against his assumption of the coveted and perilous Temporal power. His teaching on obedience to God's Law has rung in every Italian church and sounded in every Italian heart for six hundred years, and so in Italian minds has remained his teaching of the separation of the Spiritual and Temporal power. Both have sunk deep into the heart of Italy and both have borne rich fruit. Italy is one in loyalty to him, the noble ruler whose arms are on the

flag that flies over the Quirinal, and one in spiritual loyalty to him, the Holy Father who rules the Church from the Seat of St. Peter. But for Dante it is possible that neither might be to-day in Rome.

Upborne by his adoration of the Divine Wisdom he was lifted, like St. Paul, to the Seventh Heaven—in what form, "who can tell?" and saw glories which even he could not describe; but what he wrote lifted the world and sent it forward with a new conception of man's duty, and a new faith in the foundation principles of Religion. Think you it did not require courage in those days to picture prelates and, far more, Popes in Hell?

Two centuries before, the Emperor himself had come to Canossa to kneel barefoot and, in a penitent's shirt, to crave pardon of a Pope, and within a century a King of England had walked barefoot doing penance at a Pope's command. And the Pope yet had power to bring Charles of Valois to quell Florence and maintain those who condemned Dante to be burnt alive, and to crown Charles King of Sicily.

Yet, if Dante "damned to everlasting fame"

those whom he deemed the Enemies of Italy even though they might have worn the Mitre and held the Keys of St. Peter, he was the most faithful of the Faithful to the fundamental doctrines of the Church and more than Pope or Curia he established the Italian people in the truths of Christianity. What the Bishops inculcated in their pastorals, he with the parish-priest taught in the parish-church and the home.

Presentation has been made of Dante's stand upon the division between the Divine and Supreme Spiritual Authority of the Vicar of Christ to feed and guide His flock and the Temporal authority which he unrighteously asserted. He had argued on this theme powerfully in his prose essays. In his Comedy he declares it as a prophet and messenger of God, with an authority superior to that of the holder of St. Peter's Keys himself. He is not now addressing his conclusions to Florence or even to an Emperor. He is speaking to mankind and with the power of a final Judge. It is no longer argument, it is judgment.

Even in the beginning—in the dusky wood where he is lost at the very start of his strange

journey, he finds himself dismayed by the lean and hungry wolf, the Avarice of the Church, who

"E molte gente fe' gia viver grana."

"Also had many made ere now to live forlorn."

The guilt of Simony he charges in imperishable pictures against the Church, scoring the Church's worldly head himself: as when in the eighth circle he finds Nicholas III stuck upside down, and Nicholas, hearing, but not seeing his interlocutor, cries out:

"Se' tu già costi ritto,
se' tu gia costi ritto, Bonifazio?
di parecchi anni mi mentì lo scritto
Se' tu sì tosto di quell' aver sazio,
per lo qual non temesti torre a inganno
la bella donna, e di poi farne strazio?"[1]

"Art thou there already?
Art thou already there, O Boniface?
By several years the writing lied to me—
Art thou so early sated holding that
For which thou fearedst not
To fraudulently seize the lovely Lady
And then make slaughter of her."

Of the avarice of the Church he speaks also in the VIIth Canto of the Inferno, where hav-

[1] *Inferno*, XIX, 52.

ing descended into the Fourth Circle of Hell he finds the Avaricious and the Prodigal doomed to one punishment, dashing weights against each other ceaselessly with cries: "Why holdest thou so fast?" "And why castest thou away?" And among them he finds "both Popes and Cardinals o'er whom Avarice dominion absolute maintains."

In the XIXth Canto he contrasts the demand made of St. Peter; "Follow me," with the avarice of Pope Nicholas III and charges against the Pope

> "Your avarice
> O'ercasts the world with mourning, under foot
> Treading the good and raising bad men up."

And then he utters his lament against Constantine and his alleged gift to Pope Sylvester on which the Papacy based its claim to Temporal Power.

> "Ah! Constantine, to how much ill gave birth
> Not thy conversion but the plenteous dower
> Which the first wealthy Father gained from thee."

In the XVIth Canto (line 109 and *seq.*) of the Purgatorio, through Marco Lombardo, he charges the unhappy condition of the times to

the Avarice of the Church for Temporal power, which "hastened the world to 'evil.'"

"Rome that turned it unto good
Was wont to boast two suns whose several beams
Cast light on either way; the world's and God's.
One since hath quenched the other, and the Sword
Is grafted on the Crook. . . .

The Church of Rome
Mixing two Governments that ill assort,
Hath missed her footing, fallen into the mire,
And there herself and burden much defiled."

—*Cary.*

In the XXVIIth Canto of the Paradiso, where Dante is approaching the ninth Heaven, St. Peter flushing red with indignation apostrophises the avarice of his successors, especially of Boniface:

"—My place
He who usurps on earth (my place, aye, mine
Which in the presence of the Son of God
Is void), the same hath made my cemetery
A common sewer of puddle and of blood."

. . . . . .

"No purpose was of ours
That on the right hand of our successors,
Part of the Christian people should be set,
And part upon their left; nor that the keys,
Which were vouchsafed me, should for ensign serve
Unto the banners, that do levy war

On the baptized; nor I, for sigil-mark,
Set upon sold and lying privileges:
Which makes me oft to bicker and turn red.
In shepherd's clothing, greedy wolves below
Range wide o'er all the pastures. Arm of God!
Why longer sleep'st thou?"

—*Cary.*

It will cause, then, little surprise to learn that some of Dante's works were placed on the Index by the Ecclesiastical authorities and were ordered to be burnt. But this was some twenty-five years after his death and they had too firm a hold on the Italian mind to suffer permanent damage.

Nor will one, knowing this, be surprised to know that many critics and commentators have found serious fault with Dante—some have indeed reviled him. He has been characterized as "a Reformer"; "a bawdy historiographer"; as "extravagant, absurd, disgusting"; as "a Methodist Parson in Bedlam"; as "one of the most obscure of writers"; as "a fire-and-smoke poet"; as "a lustreless glow-worm"; as "a talkative showman"; as "a great master of the disgusting," etc., etc., while others have given him every virtue and grace and compared him with the greatest poets and literary masters of every race and every age.

After this we may not even be surprised to learn that his authorship of the Divine Comedy has been questioned, and that the greatest epic of Modern times has been attributed to "an obscure writer of the XVth Century who . . . published that work under the name of Dante, a well-known Author." [1] But it should be said that the same discoverer also states that the Æneid was written by a Benedictine Monk in the XIIIth Century. What a pity it is that this Clerical investigator lived too early to lend his authority to the theory of the Baconian Cipher!

The chief of the Anti-Dantists was Voltaire —whether it was owing to a Gallic disposition to undervalue Italian work and go counter to Italian enthusiasm, or whether it was Dante's fundamental solemnity and profound Christian faith—Voltaire, who in his earlier work merely ignored and passed by the work of the great Florentine Master, the Father of Tuscan—indeed, of Italian Poetry; later on grew to be his most unmeasured critic and attempted to do by his wit and ridicule what he had not been able to effect by serious discussion. He, how-

[1] Father Hardouin's "Doutes sur l'Age de Dante," cited, *Dante in English Literature*, I, p. 217.

ever, failed completely in his purpose. He aroused a storm of indignant protest from Italian writers domiciled in England, whose polemical spirit was not less intemperate than his own and he not only failed in any purpose to lower the prestige of the great "first Christian poem," if such he had, but actually brought it into a note which it might not have had in England for years to come but for the interest excited by the bitter controversy that arose between him and Rolli, Baretti, Martinelli and others. These showed up Voltaire's ignorance of his subject in a way that touched him to the quick and the close was mere vulgar vituperation that diminished Voltaire's fame and substituted, for the time being, mere notoriety.

It would appear impossible that there could be much sympathy between the railing philosopher and the successful litterateur and financier who corresponded with Kings and Savants, and the bowed scholar-poet, the gloomy exile who trod so bitterly the stairs of arrogant patrons who complained that he did not amuse them. Let him who thinks strange this want of sympathy look at the face of Voltaire when he was the most famous literary man on the continent

of Europe and then gaze on Dante's face and he will see that it was impossible to have been otherwise—as impossible as to harmonize Pagan Scepticism and Christian Faith.

It has become popular in our own time to study and analyze a man's feeling, temperament, psychic personality. We term it, when professionally analyzed, psychology, and we speak of it as though the science of Psychology were something new in our time. But it is as old as Solomon, as Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek Philosophers. In ages following theirs St. Paul went deeply into it and other Saints of lesser note followed him. St. Augustine analyzed the Soul's progress. But neither before nor since has any one gone so deeply and with such complete analysis into his own psychology and, by consequence, into universal Psychology, as Dante.

From the beginning when Love expanded his soul he presents his soul as bare as Marsyas, whom Apollo's breath drew out of his skin. Like a Psychic Anatomist he pierced to the soul's inmost centre and in prose and verse has laid bare its every emotion; its every passion. It is in part this which interwoven with other elements differentiates Dante from other poets

in greater or less degree—from all save the very greatest in an immeasurable degree.

Of the symbolism of Dante, we can scarcely speak in the compass permitted us. Whole volumes have been written on this one aspect of his writings.[1] It embraces the whole body of his work; pervades its every part; lurks in every turn, and peeps forth so unexpectedly and tantalizingly from pictures, characters, and even phrases, that Dante-students become mystified and tend to discover a mystical symbolism in even the simplest and plainest declarations. Yet there is enough symbolism to render any forced interpretation unnecessary, and often they pile one on another. For Dante was at once a mystic and a master of the art of expressing two ideas at once—the particular and the general, the concrete and the abstract. He began it as a youth—and it is woven inextricably into the Vita Nuova. He developed it in the Convito, or Banquet; and he gave it full rein in the Comedy, where it starts with the first line in the *Selva oscura* and thenceforth throughout the entire course attends his footsteps like another shadow—almost indeed like a substantial guide at Virgil's side, telling

[1] *Cf. Symbolism of Dante*, J. B. Fletcher.

in mysterious undertone the connection between that which passed before them in panoramic vision and the militant life of the struggling soul still encased in its mortal frame.

It, in fact, so underlies the entire volume of his work that some commentators have even questioned whether there ever was a Beatrice in the flesh, and have found in her only Dante's personification of Divine Wisdom and Grace, a conclusion which appears too absurd to be seriously discussed. If ever a woman shone in the flesh to a lover's eyes, it was Beatrice Portinari; if ever a lover sang from his heart to a beautiful mistress it was Dante to Beatrice Portinari. He sang love to her in a hundred keys, and even after he had exalted her to a mystical symbol drawing him to Heaven with divine compassion, when he finds her in Paradise, to which the bare mention of her name by Virgil had ever given him strength to press on even through the final circles of Purgatory (Canto XXVII), he had not eyes save for her. Her smile; her eyes; her few smiled words made him feel within as Glaucus felt who tasting the herb, was made in the sea a fellow of the other Gods. No. Beatrice in

Paradise was the symbol of Divine Grace and Love, but also she was the symbol and more than the symbol of that Love which had inspired Dante from the beginning when it first entered his soul: a Love which thenceforth, however it may for a brief period have hidden itself while Dante strayed with Forese Donati amid less-exalted pleasures, yet never had been lost and became so pure and so uplifted that the border between it and the Spiritual Love which led him into Paradise was passed without knowing when it came.

I have spoken of Dante in connection with the modern trend of so-called sociological fiction; of Dante's power of analyzing the human soul. There is a branch of this form of so-called sociological fiction which of late years, professing to deal with love, deals rather with her baser sister. To apply the name Love is an irreverence to as holy an emotion as can inspire the human heart. Those who soil their minds with such so-called literature I would point to Dante's Love. In all the great drama which he has unfolded to our gaze and in which Love is the controlling power, and in which, although it may have only stood in the wings, it

is ever on the stage or close at hand, there is not a word, not a thought, not a suggestion which is not as clean of earth as Beatrice's brow.

"E vidi le sue luci tanto mere
tanto gioconde."

"And I beheld her eyes so limpid
And so joyous."[1]

This too after she had rebuked him for gazing but on her; or as he phrases it:

"Vincendo me col lume d'un sorriso,
ella mi dissi, 'Volgiti ed ascolta,
chè non pur nei miei occhi è Paradiso.'"[2]

"Overcoming me with the light of a smile
She said to me, 'Turn and listen,
For Heaven is not only in my eyes.'"

[1] *Paradiso*, Canto XVIII, 55.
[2] *Paradiso*, Canto XVIII, 19–21.

VII

DANTE'S AND ITALIAN NATIONALITY

Boccaccio not only tells us how the first seven Cantos of the Comedy were preserved through the care of Dante's wife, but he tells a story regarding the loss for a time and the miraculous recovery of the last thirteen Cantos of the Paradiso. It appears that at the time of Dante's death these last thirteen cantos were not to be found, so that it was supposed that he had left his great work unfinished and, says Boccaccio:

"The friends Dante left behind him, his sons and his disciples, having searched at many times and for several months everything of his writing, to see whether he had left any remaining cantos; his friends generally being much mortified that God had not at least lent him so long to the world, that he might have been able to complete the small remaining part of his work; and having sought so long and never found it, they remained in despair. Jacopo and Piero were sons of Dante, and each of

them being a rhymer, they were induced by the persuasions of their friends to endeavor to complete, as far as they were able, their father's work, in order that it should not remain imperfect; when to Jacopo, who was more eager about it than his brother, there appeared a wonderful vision, which not only induced him to abandon such presumptuous folly, but showed him where the thirteen cantos were which were wanting to the Divina Commedia, and which they had not been able to find.

"A worthy man of Ravenna, whose name was Pier Giardino, and who had long been Dante's disciple, grave in his manner and worthy of credit, relates that after the eighth month from the day of his master's death, there came to his house before dawn Jacopo di Dante, who told him that that night, while he was asleep, his father Dante had appeared to him, clothed in the purest white, and his face resplendent with an extraordinary light; that he, Jacopo, asked him if he lived, and that Dante replied: 'Yes, but in the true life, not our life.' Then he, Jacopo, asked him if he had completed his work before passing into the true life, and if he had done so, what had become of that part of it which was missing, which they

none of them had been able to find. To this Dante seemed to answer: 'Yes, I finished it'; and then took him, Jacopo, by the hand, and led him into that chamber in which he, Dante, had been accustomed to sleep when he lived in this life, and, touching one of the walls, he said: 'What you have sought for so much is here'; and at these words both Dante and sleep fled from Jacopo at once. For which reason Jacopo said he could not rest without coming to explain what he had seen to Pier Giardino, in order that they should go together and search out the place thus pointed out to him, which he retained excellently in his memory, and to see whether this had been pointed out by a true spirit, or a false delusion. For which purpose, though it was still far in the night, they set off together, and went to the house in which Dante resided at the time of his death. Having called up its present owner, he admitted them, and they went to the place thus pointed out; there they found a mat fixed to the wall, as they had always been used to see it in past days; they lifted it gently up, when they found a little window in the wall, never before seen by them, nor did they even know that it was there. In it they found several

writings, all mouldy from the dampness of the walls, and had they remained there longer, in a little while they would have crumbled away. Having thoroughly cleared away the mould, they found them to be the thirteen cantos that had been wanting to complete the Commedia."[1]

Among the works accredited by many commentators to Dante are also a poetical version of The Creed in terza rima, and a version of the seven Penitential Psalms, and there is a story of Dante connected with this version of the Creed, which whether apocryphal or not, would appear natural enough in view of Dante's burning criticism of the powerful Hierachy of the church. It runs as follows: "When Dante was writing his book many people who could not understand it said that it was contrary to the Christian Faith. . . . Now at Ravenna there was a learned Franciscan friar, who was an inquisitor. This man, having heard of Dante's fame, became desirous of making his acquaintance, with the intention of finding out whether he were a heretic or no. And one morning, as Dante was in church, the inquisitor entered, and Dante being pointed out to him, he sent for him. Dante reverentially went to him, and

[1] *Dante Alighieri*, by Paget Toynbee, pp. 207–208.

was asked by the inquisitor if he were the Dante who claimed to have visited Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Dante replied: 'I am Dante Alighieri of Florence.' Whereupon the inquisitor angrily said: 'You go writing canzoni, and sonnets, and idle tales, when you would have done much better to write a learned work, resting on the foundations of the Church of God, instead of giving your time to such like rubbish, which may one of these days serve you out as you deserve.' When Dante wished to reply to the inquisitor, the latter said: 'This is not the time; but on such a day I will see you again, and I will inquire into this matter.' Dante thereupon answered that he should be well pleased for this to be done; and taking leave of the inquisitor, he went home to his own room and there and then wrote out the composition known as the Little Creed, which creed is an affirmation of the whole Christian Faith." The account goes on to say that when Dante gave his composition to the inquisitor, the latter was so confounded that Dante "came off safe and sound. And from that day forward Dante and the inquisitor became great friends." [1]

[1] *Dante Alighieri*, by Paget Toynbee, citing Papanti, *op. cit.*, pp. 47–49.

This Credo or Professione di Fede consists of a paraphrase of the Apostles' Creed, the ten Commandments, the Pater Noster, and the Ave Maria, together with reflections on the seven Sacraments, and seven Deadly Sins. There are over forty manuscripts of the Creed, the majority of which are attributed to Dante, though in a few it is assigned to Antonio da Ferrara; and it was first printed at Rome about 1476, and was reprinted as an appendix to the edition of the Divine Comedy published at Venice by Vendelin da Spira in 1477. The Seven Penitential Psalms were first printed about 1475 at Venice.[1]

In addition to Dante's recognized works there is attributed to him a treatise entitled the Quæstio de Aqua et Terra, the authenticity of which is disputed; the object of which was to show that according to Dante, "water cannot in any part of its circumference be higher than the land, together with the reasons for this connection."

And now of the true measuring of the great Commedia. First we must take it, as he tells in the letter to Can Grande della Scala that it must be taken, in two senses; it must be inter-

[1] *Dante Alighieri*, by Paget Toynbee, pp. 259–260.

preted in a literal sense and in an anagogical sense, and he illustrates this double sense by the example from the psalm: *In exitu Israel de Ægypto domus Jacob de populo barbaro fecta est Judæa sanctificatio ejus Israel potestas ejus;* for he adds if we look only at the literal sense it signifies the going out of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses; if at the anagogical, it signifies our redemption through Christ; if at the moral, it signifies the conversion of the soul from the grief and misery of sin to a state of grace, and if at the anagogical, it signifies the passage of the blessed soul from the bondage of this corruption to the freedom of the eternal glory. So also the Commedia must be taken as a beautiful poem and as a wonderful exposition of the soul's experience in its redemption through Christ.

Lowell has a fine analysis of Dante's work and place in the procession of Modern Literature and of Modern Thought. "Indeed," says he, "as Marvell's drop of dew mirrored the whole firmament; so we find in the Commedia the image of the Middle Ages, and the sentimental gyneolatry of Chivalry, which was at best but skin-deep, is lifted in Beatrice to an ideal, a universal plane. It is the same with Catholi-

cism, with imperialism, with scholastic philosophy; and nothing is more wonderful than the power of absorption and assimilation in this man, who could take up into himself the world that then was, and reproduce it with such cosmopolitan truth to human nature and to his own individuality, as to reduce all contemporary history to mere comment on his vision." Lowell has further observed that Dante's great poem is the first which has as its theme man and not a man, and that while the poem is "limited by a form of classical severity . . . he sums up in himself the two schools of modern poetry which had preceded him and while essentially lyrical in his subject is epic in the handling of it." An admirable statement.

Carlyle in his *Dante and the Divine Comedy* reckons Dante "one of the greatest men that ever lived." And of the Divine Comedy he declares that there are few things that exist worth comparing to it. Æschylus, Dante, Shakespeare—one really cannot add another greater name to these? Catholicism and Loyalty were, he says, ever with him; accordingly, he thinks that "when all records of Catholicism shall have passed away; when the Vatican shall have crumbled into dust and St. Peter's

and Strasburg Minster shall be no more; for thousands of years to come Catholicism will survive in this sublime epic of antiquity."

VIII

DANTE AND ITALIAN ASPIRATION

And as Dante transmitted to his fellow countrymen in regions which, for all his travels he never dreamed of, a National Consciousness, so he conferred on them and on us who are not Italians other beneficence. He inculcated the great idea that there inheres in political problems a moral essence; he taught that the aim as well as the essential basis of all justified Government is justice—not the execution of unjust laws; but absolute justice for all. In this he was the forerunner of Montesquieu, of Grotius and Puffendorf; of Jefferson; of Mazzini. As deeply religious as any Father of the Church he nevertheless taught, as we have seen, with irrefutable reasoning the separation of the Spiritual and the Temporal power, of Church and State, and it was his doctrine that Mazzini carried forward to its ultimate conclusion. He was the inspiration of the whole band of patriots who rescued Italy from a tyranny as supreme as ever ravined on her

vitals in Dante's own time. If Dante chose his "good Frederick" or Henry to carry out his scheme, it was not because he loved an Emperor per se; but because he thought him the fittest instrument for the great work of composing the distresses and recouping the disasters of Christendom and especially of Italy. And though, like Carducci, we might cheerfully have wished to strike off his Emperor's crown and head, like him we follow the poet from the setting to the rising sun.

But not merely did he inspire the National Consciousness of Italy and breathe into it an immortal spirit; he laid down the confines of Italy according to what he deemed and what Italians since have deemed her Natural boundaries: boundaries which, though for his own purposes, a great Ruler actually gave her for a brief period and which, at least, mainly she has attained after six hundred years. During the World War, Dante's vision of an Italy rounded out and established and Napoleon's actual delimitation of her boundary from the Stelvio to the Adriatic were constantly held up to the Italian People as their right. And but now in a great International Political Conference, one of the most eminent of Italy's

Statesmen, one of her ablest Ministers cited Dante as final authority on this very point.[1] Not that Dante was an Authority on International Law; but that he was the voice of Italy —of Immortal Italy, speaking with the authority of complete knowledge of her past and with complete knowledge of the principles of Justice to Italy and, therefore,—as Dante felt, as Signor Tittoni feels, as all Italians feel,— to the world.

There is nothing that I am aware of in Literature outside of the Law with Israel and the Koran with Islam that has the compelling sanction of Dante with the Italian People.

During the great war we find the Italians after six hundred years citing Dante as final high authority for Italy's right to her Alpine bulwarks.

It is in his story of the founding of Mantua where he tells[2] how:

> "Suso in Italia bella giace un laco
> a pie dell' alpe, che serra Lamagna
> sopra Tiralli, c'ha nome Benaco."

> "Up there in lovely Italy lies a lake
> At the foot of the Alps that lock out Germany
> Above the Tyrol; it has the name Benaco."

[1] Tommaso Tittoni.

[2] *Inferno*, XX, 61, etc.

"Per mille fonti, credo, e piu si bagna,
tra Garda e Val Camonica, Apennino
dell' acqua che nel detto lago stagna." [1]

"'Twixt Garda and the Val Camonica,
Bathe, I believe, the feet of Apennine,
The waters of a thousand springs and more
Which sink to rest at last within that lake."

The Divine Comedy has this in common with the Bible that however much it be studied it always discloses to its votaries something new. It requires thought, deep thought to sound its depths; but it carries with it a rich reward. From whatever point it is approached it opens to the pilgrim beauties and enchantments. For it is, in short, the greatest marvel performed by the mind of man. It is as much a miracle as the work of Joan of Arc.

"Dante is indeed," as says one of his commentators, "a great part of Italy." Italy is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. He is the father of Italian Nationality; the inspirer of Italian Ideality; the authority for Italian Aspiration. This is why the people of the Trentino when held by the throat by Austrian power, erected at the time of the celebration of his birth, a great monument to

[1] *Inferno*, XX, 61–65.

Dante—to the Father; this is why the people of Trieste when shackled by Austrian chains claimed as their privilege to send the lamp and the oil to burn perpetually where his sacred ashes in Ravenna have made a shrine for all Italians and, indeed, for all lovers of Liberty throughout the world.

He has trodden in high companionship the stony ways with many an Italian Exile and Patriot; with them has climbed the steep stairs and for them has sweetened the salty bread of others. He has lightened the darkness of many an Austrian dungeon and cooled the withering heat of the Piombi and many another fiery prison. He has consoled many an Italian martyr on the scaffold. He has sung in the heart of many an Italian hero on the field of battle, as he whispered to Battisti and Sauro, as he sang to the gray lines of Italy's sons as they stormed the Assiago, the Grappa, and the Carso.

IX

DANTE THE MASTER

This study has not attempted to present in any extension of detail the noble work of Dante Alighieri but rather, certain thoughts upon Dante himself and the influence on the world of his work, as a poet; as a philosopher, as a teacher—as a world-teacher, the Master of Chaucer and Spenser and Shakespeare and Milton.

And this has been done chiefly, because it has been felt that it would be too audacious to attempt to quote extensively extracts from the greatest of poets and artists in a tongue possibly difficult even for Italians, and whose beauty can only be suitably rendered by one who knows that tongue perfectly. How can one successfully present parts of a work, complete as a whole, whose harmonies range from the majestic grandeur of sublimity, comparable only to the music of the spheres, to the delicate and melodious flutings of birds?

What I have desired is as an American to do honor to Italy and her greatest poet; to suggest the great debt that we Americans—not only Americans of Italian blood, but other of us, Americans of English blood, owe to him who six hundred years ago, dying in exile, left, as a heritage to us all, the heritage of a comprehension of Liberty; of Justice; of fear of God; of Devotion to Him; of Reverence for Women: a heritage that has set the world forward and that, if rightly guarded, will in time bring about the realization of Dante's divine vision of Peace and Love and the coming of the Kingdom of Right in the ineffable light of the Paradise of God.

Now having given these pictures from the entrancing scenes with which his work is filled as well as with those terrible scenes (mainly from the vision of Hell) which shock the sensitive mind, I must recur to the great fact that all these scenes, the dreadful and the beautiful alike, are but the outer garment of the spirit of the poem, under which lies the profoundest thought that the human mind is capable of. They are but as the arabesques on the sword which Homer holds as the Emblem of his imperial authority over all the Masters of Song.

Its thought goes to the bottom of the destiny of the Human Soul and endeavors to solve it all. It deals with the basic structure of Human Society and analyzes alike the working of the mind and the passion of the soul; reasons of the foundations of Creation and of Life, seeks and discloses the primal principles of Justice and Right while it pictures the ceaseless warfare between Righteousness and wrong.

In Dante we find the whole cycle of man's intellectual life. In youth he sings of Love—wholly of Love, as is fitting to Youth. It is, as Carlyle has observed, the singing-time. In middle age, chastened by the experience of Love, he, under mastery of Reason, wrote of Justice, Equity, and Truth. As he grew older and found deeper experience of aspiration and strife and sorrow, his mind, broadened and elevated, took in a loftier vision and a vaster scope and he sang of Divine Might, Majesty and Dominion, and of Divine Justice and Mercy. Yet all through the whole of his Life Love ruled and gave the true direction to his song which becomes a part of the great harmony in which under Love's sway move the sun and all the other stars.

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